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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

JANUARY 22 1982

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Making a homeland for the mind

By George Steiner

GEORG LUKÁCS:
Eine Autobiographie im Dialog
307pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

ÉVA FEKETE and ÉVA KARÁDI
(Editors):
György Lukács: His Life in Pictures
and Documents
265pp. Budapest: Corvina
9 63 13 07751

Great intelligence can be a homeland. "Before 1945", remarks Georg Lukács, "I never travelled in Europe with a legal passport." A Hungarian, he wrote almost the totality of his works in German. Exile, more or less clandestine, in Vienna, Berlin, Moscow, was Lukács's natural habitat. He held no university post till the age of sixty. His most consequential intervention in actual revolutionary politics, the "theses" on the relations between the agricultural and the industrial proletariat which he propounded at the time of the Béla Kun programme and the Second Congress of the Hungarian Communist Party, appeared under the pseudonym "Blum".

Yet, in another sense, Lukács was deep-rooted. He was curiously dismissive in reference to his own Judaism, but a Jew to the tip of his fingers. Unhoused, peregrine, domestic in ostracism, he is one of that tragic constellation - Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin, Adorno, Herbert Marcuse - of Jewish abstractionists, possessed by a messianic rage for logic, for systematic order in the social condition of man. Lukács's Marxism is, in essence, a refusal of the world's incoherence, of the murderous stupidities whereby men and women misconduct their lives. Like the other Jewish self-exiles whose radicalism out of Central Europe has so incisively marked the century, Lukács is an heir in immanence to the transcendent absolute of Spinoza.

He made his choice in 1919. He moved into the Marxist promise of social justice or, rather, into the Marxist promise of method, of a contract with reason and a rational grasp of human affairs, as he would dwell, and he never left it. When the Party restored to Lukács in 1967 the card it had taken from him be-

cause of his participation in the Hungarian insurrection of 1956 and in the Imre Nagy regime, the pariah riposted that he had never been outside the KPU. It had, temporarily, left him. At times of extreme pressure, during the late 1950s and early 60s, Lukács was urged to emigrate, to accept one or another of the prestigious academic solicitations from "outside". Kádár would have let him go. But Lukács never wavered. To him the capitalist world was not only historically doomed, but a domain of contingency, almost of anarchy. Even at its cruelest, the lodging of necessity, as Hegel and Marx had, after Kant, constructed it, was preferable.

Here, as Lukács and the Frankfurt School plainly, agonizingly perceived, a solution may be found for the problem of how abstract thought, the life of the intellect, can be knit to historical reality, to the exactions and the dignity of concrete existence. No member of the intelligentsia since Rousseau had experienced more acutely, nearer his nerve-ends, than Lukács, the menace of alienation. At home in Marxism, in the conviction that his philosophic-aesthetic critique bore immediately on the material facts of current history and society, he could endure, indeed prosper in, the marginality of his biographical circumstance. When first I called on him, in the winter of 1957-8, in a house still pock-marked with shell-bursts and grenade-splinters, I stood speechless before the armada of his printed works, as it crowded the book-shelves. Lukács seized on my chair in a motion at once vulnerable and amused: "You want to know how one gets work done? It's easy. House-arrest, Steiner, house-arrest!"

Informed by his doctors that he had not long to live, Lukács, in 1971, agreed to set down a memoir of his personal life and thought. He did so in stenographic style, under the title *Gelebtes Denken*. But his strength was failing. He agreed to use this sketch as the basis for a series of interviews with Erzsébet Vezér and István Eörsi. These took place in May 1971 and were taped. The text before us is, as a result, many-layered. It is "an autobiography in dialogue", together with Lukács's own fragmentary jot-

tings. Eörsi has edited and prefaced the original which is, in turn, translated into German by Hans-Henning Paetzke. To complicate matters further, the editor has, at certain points, amended or clarified the tapes, inserting passages from Lukács's written torso. Questions arise, inevitably, as to Lukács's own intentions, with their intricate interplay of private candour and public legacy. They arise also with rega-



Georg Lukács

to editorial treatment and the translation of Hungarian expressions, turns of phrase, allusions, which Lukács was, himself, using in ways influenced by a life-time of composition and reflection in and through German. *Gelebtes Denken* has elements of a palimpsest; it invites decoding. Its fundamental authenticity, however, is evident. Lukács's voice, the often arduous, nervous pulse of his idiom and motions of spirit, comes through unmistakably.

There is scant comfort in this book for the liberal persuasion. Nor is there any solace for those who (naïvely?) harbour the belief that any man of obvious intellectual stature and moral awareness who has committed his strengths to Commun-

ism must, in the face of the Gulag and of Soviet realities, end his days in more or less avowed disenchantment and remorse. Lukács's self-portrait is that of a "hard-liner". A quotation from Hebbel's *Judith* seems to have been talismanic to him: "Wenn Du zwischen mich und meine Tat eine Sünde stellst: wer bin ich, dass ich mit Dir darüber hadere, dass ich mich Dir entziehen sollte!" The sentence is not easy to translate or interpret. "If/when you interpose sin between myself and my deed, who am I to quarrel with you, what justification would there be for me to withdraw from you?" Lukács sees this "affirmative query" as the embodiment of the *ethischen Konflikt*, or ethical dilemma. There are situations - perhaps all genuine political and revolutionary situations are such - in which one must act rightly (richtig), even "justly", yet "unethically" (unethisch).

Pressed to justify his mainly passive but, on occasion, positive stance towards the Moscow purge trials, Lukács formulates a twofold apology. At the time (he was himself a refugee in Stalin's capital, an individual whose cosmopolitan, Jewish personality made of him a potential victim), protest would have been futile. It would have meant suicide and, in consequence, the removal of an active soul and brain from the world-struggle against Fascism and Nazism. Lukács's retrospective defence is subtler. Do we, he challenges, worry over the legality, over the due process in respect of evidence, of the successive trials of the Girondins, of Danton, of Robespierre? Do we not, on the contrary, observe these episodes as necessary crises in the ultimately humane logic and libertarian dynamics of the French Revolution? Why, then, not extend the same understanding to those internal, factional struggles which, according to Lukács, were an inevitable part of the evolution of the Soviet Union towards industrial modernity, towards the sense of national and "Stalinist" cohesion which was to make possible the defeat of Hitler? Within this general perspective, moreover, Lukács draws pointed distinctions. He does not disguise his distaste for Trotsky, and Trotskyism. He judges them as agencies of anarchic muddle which had to

be eliminated. Psychologically, we can sense in this attitude the contempt of the mandarin for the free-lance.

Lukács did not disguise from his visitors and intimates that the problem of Stalin was compelling to his thoughts and sensibility. Was Stalinism a monstrous piece of bad luck, a venomous and "dialectically" extraneous singularity in the rationale of history? Was it a necessary phase, an aggravated Bonapartism, through which the proletarian revolution must pass? Or was it an endemic and therefore potentially recursive possibility, in the very structure of Marxism-Leninism, especially when the latter is installed in an economically and educationally underdeveloped society?

If this memoir is to be trusted, Lukács's sense of this cardinal question or, at the least, the sense he wished to convey to those who read and come after him, had become more intransigent with age. A "Stalinist" thread runs through the whole text. Stalin had been right against Meirings's conception or Pukhanov's of a Marxist aesthetics somehow distinct from the materialist totality of Marxism as a whole. Stalin had grasped, long before Lukács and in implicit repudiation of Lukács's own earlier works, the comprehensive meaning of Engels's "dialectics of nature". Stalinism is not to be understood as a species of "irrationalism", comparable to that which we find in Fascist and Nazi totalitarianism. It is, rather, a kind of "hyper-rationalism" in which theoretical concepts and a (just) view of long-range strategic goals are subordinated to immediate tactics. In Stalin, the tactician prevailed damagingly over the theoretician and the strategist. The Hitler-Stalin Pact, argues Lukács, was tactically correct. What Stalin did, however, was to draw the false strategic conclusions from his tactical insight. Hence his misjudgment of the motives and conduct of the Western powers during the Second World War, hence his blind persecution of genuine anti-Fascist elements in the Communist International and the occupied territories. But could anyone except Stalin have withstood the terrible impact of German invasion or made of backward Russia

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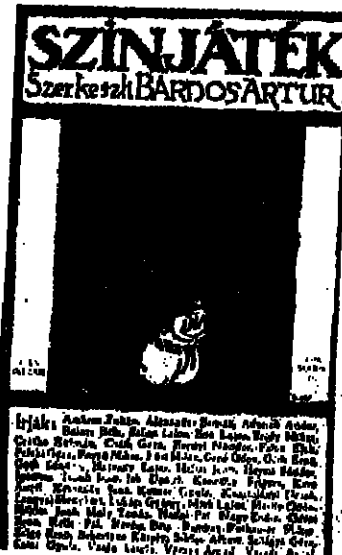
one of the two super-powers in the post-war era?

At the moment of the Soviet intervention in Prague, in 1968, Lukács is rumoured to have said something to the effect that, perhaps, the course of socialist-revolutionary history since 1917 had been a dead end, that the entire experiment would have to be begun all over again "in some other time and place". *Gelebtes Denken* is made of sterner stuff. Despite the human suffering, the waste of human and material resources which it brought about, despite its vulgarization and even negation of the authentic Marxist concept of "historical necessity", Stalinism amounts to a phase of positive achievement.

Certain reflexes of sensibility, certain uses of language follow on such an assessment. Reflecting on the show-trials and political executions in post-war Hungary, Lukács speaks of "ein präventiver Mord" (a preventive murder). If the German translation is accurate, Lukács qualifies the tortures whereby false confessions were exacted from such victims as László Rajk as "bedenklich", i.e. as "giving ground for thoughtful concern". On the eve of his death and in the sanctuary of his eminence, Lukács had no factual need to resort to such expressions. They represent that spell which brute power, which terror in *praxis* often exercise on the imagination, on the nervous system, of the scholar. They represent also, I think, that zest for casuistry, for the formalist defence of the indefensible, which Thomas Mann had noted and detailed in Lukács when he made of him the original of Naphta in *The Magic Mountain*.

The personal, critical relation to Mann, as Lukács recalls it, as it is eloquent in photographs and documents across decades, was central to Lukács's literary theory. What Balzac had been to Marx, the author of *Buddenbrooks* was to Lukács. Here was an arch-conservative patrician, an explicit defender of high-bourgeois values, whose genius for insight, whose sheer seriousness as an artist, made of his novels the irrefutable critique of a dying society. Lukács saw in Mann's fictions the splendid proof for the tenet that "classical realism" cannot lie, that whatever the conscious ideology and class-interests of the great realist (Goethe, Balzac, Tolstoy, Mann), his findings will be "radical" and, in the true sense of the word, "revolutionary". Mann, in turn, found in Lukács an incomparable "reader between the lines".

Contacts with Brecht were notoriously ambiguous, even polemic. To



Two literary and art reviews which published the work of Lukács and Béla Balázs, considered by Lukács to be one of the most important Hungarian poets - from the second of the books reviewed here.

Brecht, Lukács was the incarnation of the Hegelian academic legislating to the arts without being himself endowed with any creative instincts. Lukács recognized Brecht's talents. But Brecht was, in the final analysis, a bohemian, an exhibitionist of prodigious manipulative ruses who had borrowed from Marxism certain rhetorical short-cuts. Brecht flourished in the Expressionist milieu; to Lukács, Expressionism, for all its logic in the febrile historical moment, was merely the prelude to the surrealist and modernist crazes which he so magisterially rejected. In these memoirs, the antagonism mellows. In late years, the two men met on terms of amicable distrust. And Lukács, who was at the time at a spa (a characteristically Victorian touch), came to Berlin to speak at Brecht's funeral. Survival had become Lukács's métier.

Great shades crowd his tenacious, often unforgiving remembrance. Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Karl Mannheim were among his teachers or colleagues. Though their theoretic and pragmatic ways parted, Lukács retains to the end his respect for the messianic innocence of Ernst Bloch. When he was commissar for education and culture under Béla Kun, the young Lukács recruited for his committee on music Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály and Ernst Dohányi. Imperial and insurrectionary Budapest was small enough to bring talent and Jewish talent in particular, into impulsive proximity. In the sphere of art-history, Lukács knew and interacted with Frederik Antal, Arnold Hauser and the formidable Charles

de Tolnay. The Polányis were intimates. And it is just this unrecapitulated wealth of emotional-intellectual exchange, this very late (last 7) season of European humanism, which gave to Lukács's early essays, gathered in *Die Seele und die Formen*, their delicate, penetrating sadness (witness the pioneering article on Kierkegaard). This is the "Walter Benjamin" hour in Lukács. He was to repudiate it, as he was to repudiate Benjamin himself for his hermeticism and tragic untimeliness.

In these conversations, Lukács scorns the teutonic-bourgeois notion of a *Lebenswerk*, of an *opera omnia* leather-bound for ages to come. Books, he rules, are provisional aids in the validating or, more often, negating context of historical-social material conditions. Nevertheless, major phases of concentration and discursive form do emerge, not only in the writings themselves, but in the distinctions drawn by Lukács in retrospect. After the experimental and pre-Marxist attempts at establishing a methodological basis for "impressionism" (here, can, of course, be no applied criticism, the years of application, the years of consolidation in the guiding light of Lukács's study, in Moscow, of Marx's 1844 manuscripts. The tomes on French and German realism, on the young Hegel, on the historical novel (with the key revelation of Walter Scott), the Goethe-Schiller correspondence, constitute a massive ensemble. Though bitterly attacked for its partisan crudity, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* still strikes me as a challenging indictment. Lukács asks: what are

the affinities between, the continuities from, German Idealist and post-Idealist metaphysics and psychology (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche) and the barbarism which ensued? The tone in which he poses the question is, too often, one of vulgar simplification and philippic. The question, however, is fundamental. More damaging to Lukács's stature as a literary critic-historian is the omission from his theory and readings of the novels of Proust, of Joyce, of Kafka. The doctrinal reasons for this omission, the lacunae of sensibility which it reveals, are not difficult to place. But the diminution of responsible perception is, no less than in the straggly parallel case of F. R. Leavis's defensive parochialism, drastic.

The final phase was taken up by "more serious matters". It saw the production of the voluminous, although incomplete, *Aesthetics*, and of the *Ontologie*, a massive torso of which much has appeared posthumously. To the latter Lukács attached supreme significance. With an explicit ontological foundation, Marxist interpretations of history, of literature, of man's activities of consciousness, would remain vulnerable to contingency and tactical mislaid. Lukács was intent on forjuring the quintessence of Marxism: "Menschheit des Geschichtsprozesses, der sich - sehr variabel - in jedem einzelnen menschlichen Lebenslauf verwirklicht. So ist jeder Einzelmensch - einerseits, mit wieweil Bewusstheit - aktiver Faktor im [des] Gesamtprozesses, dessen Produkt er zugleich ist." ("The humanization of man as the content of the process of history which - very variously - is realized in the course of every human life. Thus, every individual - no matter how consciously - is an active ingredient in this total historical process, of which he is at the same time that Lukács does not seem to me that Lukács's late, systematic treatises, contribute very much to the exposition, let alone fulfillment, of this ideal of "man's becoming man".

One's sense of the core of Lukács, as it comes through also in the fascinating gallery of the photographs

taken of him just before his death, is compactly summarized in a recent book by his interviewers. It attributes his personal survival to the NKVD purges to the fact that the NKVD found his long quarters so wretched as to make seizure unprofitable. Should we not coil from so abjectly opportunistic and cynical a causality? Not at all. The conduct of the Stalinist boss-lums was an "objective" reflection of and response to the inevitable crisis in Soviet cities at that moment. One can hear Lukács-Naphta saying this.

There is in Lukács's life and work a primary creative "duplication", brought up in a household of great wealth and Central European culture, he assumed, as a matter of course, that the values to be realized by man and society are those of the spirit, of the thinking intellect. Consciously or not, he laboured through out his whole existence to secure these essentially conservative ideals to make the world not only "safe for", but actively answerable to Goethe, Pushkin, Balzac or Thomas Mann. He sensed, long before others, that the ultimate threat to such aims stemmed from what he knew or imagined to be "America", the mass-consumer utopias of its permanence. Even the Gulag (this is evident in Lukács's beautifully reproduced monograph on the early Solovitsyn) is less of a peril to the life of the spirit than is the detergent life of "Americanism" - and all technocratic-capitalism must strive to become "America".

In the "Americas" of the West, there are no necessary bonds between the activities of the spirit and those of the political and market-forces on the other. To Lukács, the Western intellectual was a more or less privileged, a more or less deplorable, parasite and entertainer. For all its ambiguities, for all its compromises and even humiliations - the famous self-criticism in regard to *History and Class-Consciousness* - Lukács's personal life and the books he thought and wrote, had gone hand in hand with historical reality. They mattered intensely. The phrase which he used to characterize what he foresaw as the condition of dons, *literature and also means trial* of history. But I may well be wrong, and the *Ontologie*, with its, perhaps, unconscious attempts at "counter-echoing" the detested Heidegger, will need to be lived with.

One's sense of the core of Lukács, as it comes through also in the fascinating gallery of the photographs

appointing about the too-indiscriminate use of examples: "like the Dadaists... like Moravia... like Anthony Powell...". The comparisons do not illuminate; instead, they blur the point that is being made. And there are crucial differences, too, between Sterne and his latter-day disciples, such as Grass and John Barth. These latch on to Sterne's virtuosity, his awareness of the artist's ultimate control over his subject-matter, but ignore the desperate sense of failure and loss which such an awareness brings with it. Since *Tristram Shandy*, only *Lolita*, and the works of Beckett, to my mind, have been able to capture this paradox: the more control the artist has over words the more conscious he must be that it is only over words that he has control. The final impression a novel by Grass (and even more by certain "American" so-called "experimentalists") leaves with the reader is of a hard carapace of self-confidence and even self-admiration, which, in books as in people, is not the most endearing of traits.

But Parry himself certainly can't be accused of that. An acute in his insights as Erich Heller and George Steiner, he succeeds in making one feel, as they sometimes do not, that his eye is always on the object. At his best, he is nearly always at his best in these essays) his prose is a transparent medium, and he achieves what must surely be the critic's ultimate aim: sending one back with renewed excitement to the book and authors about which he has chosen to speak.

'The Jesus dynasty'

By Jonathan Sumption

MICHAEL BAIGENT, RICHARD LEIGH and HENRY LINCOLN:
The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail
445pp. Cape. £8.95.
0 224 01735 7

This rather silly book would not be worth noticing were it not for two factors which have nothing to do with its merits. One is that Henry Lincoln, the third-named author, has already embodied some of its ideas in three documentaries broadcast by the BBC. The other is that the public's consuming interest in secret societies and esoterica will ensure that it is widely read, however worthless.

The authors set out to explain the mysterious wealth of Bérenger Saunière, parish priest of Rennes-le-Château, a small village in the French foothills of the Pyrenees. Saunière, who lived in Rennes from 1885 until his death in 1917, is said to have discovered some coded documents in his church during a restoration in the 1890s and shortly afterwards to have acquired a great fortune from some mysterious source which he always refused to divulge. In France the mystery of Bérenger Saunière has produced a spate of books, half fact, half fiction. This one, however, purports to be wholly fact, the authors allowing only that a few "details here and there" may be "subject to modification" in the light of further research.

The assertion is that Jesus Christ was the bridegroom at the marriage feast of Cana, and that Mary Magdalen was his bride. Between them they had a number of children, including Barabbas. Jesus was not really crucified. His family bribed Pilate to stage a phoney crucifixion, thereby enabling him to fulfil the Old Testament prophecies before quietly slipping off to the east, or perhaps going to ground in Palestine. Meanwhile, Mary Magdalen and Barabbas (or perhaps it was another son) took ship to Provence.

The authors thus adopt as fact the legend forged by the monks of Vézelay in the eleventh century to justify their claim to possess her relics. But there are interesting variants. In the authors' version the descendants of Jesus and Mary Magdalen became kings of an autonomous Jewish principality in southern France. In the fifth century, the authors suggest, the Jesus dynasty intermarried with the rulers of the Franks, with the result that the Merovingian dynasty had the blood of Jesus in their veins until Dagobert II, who was murdered with the assistance of the Church in 679. Dagobert's son, believed at the time to be dead, in fact survived to continue the line, and to this day his descendants are living comfortably in France in the knowledge that they are its rightful kings and successors of the Messiah.

The secret of Christ's descendants in France constituted the treasure of the Holy Grail. The authors "can only speculate" on the physical form of the Grail, but perhaps it consisted of "the equivalent, so to speak, of Jesus's marriage licence and/or the birth certificates of his children" or else, "something else of comparably explosive import". Whatever it was, the treasure was preserved in Jerusalem until the First Crusade, when Godfrey of Bouillon (himself a descendant of Jesus) went out to Jerusalem as its leader. There he founded the Order of the Temple, a precursor of the Order of the Templars. The Order of the Temple, and after them the Templars, were in charge of the preservation of the Grail, and with this object in view Bertrand de Blanchefort, Grand Master of the Temple, caused the Grail to be taken to France and buried in a specially excavated hillside near Rennes-le-Château.

In some obscure fashion the Albigensian heresy comes into all this. Perhaps the Albigensians had the Grail with them in the castle of Montségur where they made their last stand in 1244. If so, they got it back to its hillside before the battle

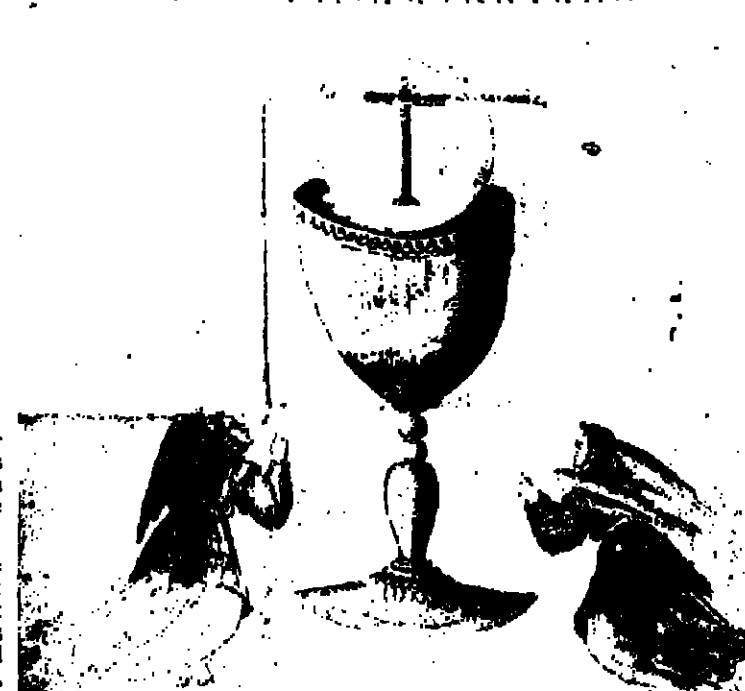
finally fell. Thereafter it was guarded by the Templars and, when that order was dissolved, by the Order of the Church in the murder of Dagobert II. The Order of the Temple itself is anxious to keep the secret until its time is come. For centuries one or other of them has censored the sources used by historians. They have bumped off the cognoscenti by throwing them from high-speed trains, and obstructed the researches of Messrs Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln by ensuring that when they want to read a book in the Bibliothèque Nationale their application form is mislaid or the book is on loan to another reader.

We have come some way from Bérenger Saunière. Indeed the authors are in some difficulty in bringing him back into the picture at the end of the book and must resort to the dark suggestion that he got his money by blackmailing the Vatican with the threat to reveal the secret of the Grail. And why not? The authors' researches have been guided by three principal canons of historical enquiry. The first of them is that there is more to everything than meets the eye. If somebody is somebody else's nephew or comes from the same part of Italy, or met him somewhere or other, here is a remarkable coincidence which cries out for an explanation. Somewhere there must be the seeds of a conspiracy. Secondly, if a hypothesis is possible (or, to use the authors' words "cannot be dismissed out of hand"), and if another hypothesis can be devised which is consistent with it, then both hypotheses must be true. So, if there was a secret about Jesus's descendants in France, Bérenger Saunière might have discovered it, and if he had discovered it he might have used it to blackmail the Vatican. Therefore there was such a secret and he did discover it and did blackmail the Vatican. Thirdly, if there is no evidence for something, then it must be true, the evidence having evidently been suppressed. We are told, for example, that the Vatican was always afraid of Saunière, a circumstance clearly pointing to blackmail. The authority for the proposition is to be found in a note at the end of the book which explains that two searches of the Vatican archives have failed to reveal any mention of him whatever, which "suggests that all information regarding this priest has been extracted deliberately".

This being the basic approach it was perhaps unnecessary for the authors to cite (or indeed to have) any sources for their theses. In fact, however, some thirty pages of references appear *ex abundanti cautela*. We have, in the first place, references to reputable sources which, on inspection, are found not to support the text. There is about one instance per page of this technique, so I shall content myself with a single example. The existence of the Order of the Temple in the twelfth century is said to be proved by original charters. The charters exist. But they refer to a community of Benedictine monks established on Mount Sion shortly after the First Crusade.

Other references are to genuine but disreputable sources, such as the epic poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and in particular the Grail legends of Wolfram von Eschenbach. The refusal of historians to treat these legends as sources for historical events several centuries earlier is informally dismissed as a professional pederasty on the basis that a literary myth can carry the reflection of real events through a millennium. It is rather like reconstructing the history of ab-

LEONARDO DA VINCI'S SACRAMENTAL LOG



The chalice of the blood of Christ, as depicted on the flag of the Christian rebels at Shinbara in Japan in 1637-38, now in the Okayama Dinsli Collection; one of the 118 illustrations (15 in colour) in *The Grail: Quest for the eternal* by John Matthews (96pp. New York: Crossroad. £9.95. 0 8245 0035 0).

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Healing the division

By Gabriel Josipovici

IDRIS PARRY:
Hand to Mouth
And other essays.
173pp. Manchester: Carcanet New Press. £6.95.
0 85635 275 2

What a pleasure to read a short, modest volume of essays and to know, when one has finished, that one will return to it many times in the future. Idris Parry has brought together a number of his recent radio talks and occasional pieces without making any large claims for their significance or attempting to give them a spurious unity, but such is the depth of his understanding of his chosen topics, and so clearly does his deep imaginative response to art come through, that the book is not only a pleasure in itself, but a constant invitation to re-read some of the major authors of the last two hundred years.

With the exception of one on Sterne, the essays are all on German subjects, and the book includes Parry's lucid translation of one of the classics of Romanticism, Kleist's *Interim* on marriage. But Parry is not a writer about Rilke, or Schopenhauer, or Camus, or even about the German-Swiss writer he loved, Kafka, who like Lukács

than he explicitly says. It is his involvement with the individual problems of these writers that makes the universal issues stand out so clearly.

What Parry finds in Sterne he finds in all the writers he deals with: that the sense of relevance and importance we feel on reading them comes from an initial letting go on their part, a refusal to allow the mind or the form to dictate; a willingness to let instinct take over, and thus an ability to write in a way which has analogies with nature and that with art as it has been conceived since the Renaissance - as the imposition of form on nature.

In Sterne's digressive technique we see a perfect reflection of movement in nature. He starts, and doesn't know what will be given him in the second sentence. What results depends on the first sentence, as the transformations of nature are always a development of what is already there. Creation in this novel and in nature is constant and versatile. Forms are generated by excitement caused through the friction of forces working on each other, surprising each other, but never letting go. They can't let go. Literature has its own conservation of energy.

But of course such openness has its dangers, both artistic and personal. One of Parry's most moving essays is the one devoted to Robert Walser, the German-Swiss writer he loved, Kafka, who like Lukács

out in his life and his art to make himself smaller than the small, humbler than the most humble, as unassertive as possible. Walser's novel, *Jakob von Gunten*, concerns an academy for servants, but Parry shows that Walser, uninterested in the comic or picturesque possibilities of this theme, uses it to reflect his own strongly held beliefs, which could be summed up thus: We have had enough of mastery, let us truly learn to be servants. Walser deserves to be better known in this country. Parry's essay should help. Yet Walser spent the last half of his life in mental homes. When a friend who was visiting him asked him whether he was writing at all he replied: "I am not here to write. I am here to be mad."

The other authors Parry deals with somehow managed to use their art as a way of keeping them out of the madhouse, and Parry's essay on Mann ends by quoting with approval the words Mann puts into Schiller's mouth and which are applicable to himself: "Not to descend into chaos; at least not to stay there! But to rise to the light out of chaos, which is fullness; whatever is able and ready to win form. Not to brood! Work! Define; eliminate, give form and completeness."

There are many ways of doing this. Parry's essay on Kafka does, as Parry and Camus do, by trying to discover the rhythm which exists even in what is called chaos. Parry's essay on Rilke does,

Three of the eleven essays in this book deal with Rilke, and the finest of Rodin is Rilke's *oeuvre*. For Parry, Rodin is the artist who has made the simple daily task of making and letting the material guide the hand until the maker is himself no different from all other things in nature. This was Rilke's life-long project, and Parry brings out beautifully the depth of his commitment to it. The theme of the poem-as-sculpture, the idea of words as a division but of the work of the hand as healing the division, is the central theme of the collection. It leads Parry back to the German rediscovery of Greek art and to the artist who is though no single essay is devoted to him: Goethe. There is no getting away from Goethe, for Parry as for Mann, but Parry is so much at ease with him, so familiar with him, that he can say that he comes through not as the distant, God-like, rather smug figure so often presented to us, but as a positively Shakespearean in all his unassertive grasp of the unity of all things.

If I have one criticism to make of Parry's style and method it is that it is not critical enough. In a way, he is too ready to reveal more about the subject, and the best essays have always been those devoted to artists whom Parry does not love. But this is occasionally something a little bland about the muted prose, something which

The image of the king

By G. R. Elton

CHARLES ROSS:

Richard III

265pp. Eyre Methuen, £9.95.
0 413 29530 3

There are a good many royal mysteries in English history but none more surprising than the bitter battles waged over Richard III's reputation. Richard Plantagenet, duke of Gloucester, who died before his thirty-third birthday, sat on the throne for just over two years – the shortest reign so far of any king not a minor. He got there by usurpation, declaring either his predecessor (his brother) or that king's children illegitimate, and he unquestionably benefited from a number of convenient killings – opponents disposed of without the formality of trials. Even while he reigned he was thought to have had his nephews murdered in the Tower. On the other hand, he had earlier served his brother Edward IV faithfully enough, even though (as everybody was bound to do sooner or later) he had quarrelled with his other brother, George, Duke of Clarence. Clarence's murder offered one of several clear indications to him how power was to be won and preserved in the politics of the late fifteenth century. From the ruthless disposal of landed properties which the whole Yorkist dynasty practised with skill, he had gathered great wealth, but he gained some kudos from the amount of it that he directed into institutions of piety and learning.

All that we know about Richard makes him a very conventional, representative operator of the day – quite competent at the political game, possessed of devious cunning, formally devout, and equipped with that streak of nakedly unscrupulous self-seeking which the collapse of royal authority in the reign of Henry VI had turned into an easy and rapid road to worldly success. As Charles Ross shows, in this excellent follow-up to his splendid biography of Edward IV, Richard III was neither especially admirable nor impressively evil. A brave but not very distinguished soldier, a reasonably faithful husband, a very devious politician, and a king without achievements, he stands there as a man some way from the first rank.

Why, then, should he of all people excite such passions? Why should he be chosen as ewe-lamb by the sort of people who commonly spend their ingenuity on finding some impossible author for Shakespeare's plays? The clue lies there: the Richard III of legend, the determined villain, was created by Shakespeare out of the dubious material supplied by Thomas More via the chronicler Edward Hall. Since there are those who cannot resist pulling Shakespeare down, quixotic and ill-learned chivalry thus found a ready-made object. Ever since the early seventeenth century, imaginative counterblasts have appeared, and – assisted by romantic rubbish about the White Rose – the fight goes on to cleanse great Richard's image of the dirt cast upon it by what is known as Tudor propaganda.

If reason could end the nonsense, Professor Ross's book would do the

trick. Not only does he carefully review the tangled historiography of his theme in a brilliantly impartial opening chapter, but the picture he builds up from the real evidence leaves the Friends of Richard III (incorporated or limited) with not a sparrow's leg to stand on. Perhaps it is a pity that even Ross uses phrases about Tudor propaganda which the uninitiated must suggest official sponsorship of the legend: as he makes quite plain, Richard's memory was blackened by private enterprise embroiling upon the untold villainies in which he got involved. He was not a nice man; if he had been, he would not have lasted five minutes in the politics of his day. But neither was he a devil from hell, nor even crook-backed. Rather ordinary, in fact, and undistinguished, though in his power-hunger dangerous.

Ross analyses well Richard's chief source of power as weakness – the complex dynastic relationships and manoeuvres of the upper landed classes to which he belonged. The analysis, of necessity rather laboured, was well worth doing because it supplies the real world in which Richard had to operate. Like Edward, he built his strength on faction, in his case supplied by the powerful northern alliance which he created. Most useful to a usurper, this became a notable handicap to a king. Richard got his chance because Edward IV left behind a divided Yorkist faction, but it was his perhaps necessary loyalty to those northern nobles (who under him got in everywhere) that alienated enough support elsewhere to encourage Henry Tudor in his ultimately

successful efforts to dislodge the Yorkist dynasty.

Despite some opinion to the contrary, it seems to me that Yorkist failure ultimately derived from the dynasty's inability to free itself from dependence upon some sector of the political nobility. Neither Edward IV nor Richard III ever made himself, as Henry VII was to do, into a "national" king, standing above the factions. The political reality of the Yorkist reigns emerges in all that reckless and endless playing about with grants and resumptions, that welter of executions without form of law; and all of this ceased in 1485. Tudor monarchs rewarded loyalty and punished disobedience with a heavy and often ruthless hand, but the hand was non-partisan. Of course, they were assisted by the landed nobility's growing weariness, but also by their understanding that kingship could prosper only if it was

elevated above the ruck of aristocratic politics.

Ross has written an effectively definitive book on Richard III, to whom he is as kind as justice permits. He might have disposed of more categorically than he does of Richard's bemused admirers. Thus H. G. Hanbury's ridiculous praise for Richard the great legislator is only (as Ross says) vastly overestimated the weight of the statutes passed in his only parliament but (a grounds and contrary to all the probability of the king. So far as the evidence goes, Richard was no legislator and not much taken with the law: he craved only power and wealth. There are no signs that he would have become anything but a meaning: the White Boar really is a bit of a bore.

Hammer for heretics

By Claire Cross

MARGARET BOWKER:

The Henrician Reformation

The Diocese of Lincoln under John Longland 1521-1547

229pp. Cambridge University Press

0 521 23639 8

In this companion volume to *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln 1493-1520*, published in 1968, Margaret Bowker has brought her scholarly analysis of the see of Lincoln in the late Middle Ages to a logical conclusion on the death of Lincoln's last medieval bishop, which happened to coincide with that of the monarch to whom he had acted as confessor. Historians in previous generations, too conscious of England's destiny as a Protestant nation, have tended to de facto the Henrician Reformation seeking signs of change and overlooking the evidence of religious conservatism. Here Mrs Bowker demonstrates the true light an approach from the medieval background can throw on the revolutionary events of the 1530s.

When John Longland attained the see of Lincoln in 1521, the last bishop to preside over a diocese which extended south from the Humber to the Thames, east from the archdeaconries of Leicester and Oxford to those of Huntingdon and Bedford, and which contained no less than 1,736 parishes, he accepted pastoral responsibility for a region which showed more indications of autumnal decay than of a second spring. Very much an Oxford theologian who had already made his mark as a court preacher, Longland undertook his episcopal duties in a spirit of cautious Catholic reform, and his new diocese provided him with many occasions for exercising his exhorting and somewhat repressive talents.

Somewhat before he rose to the episcopate, Longland had leached the monks of Westminster on the observance of the rule of St. Benedict; his visitations of monastic houses in the diocese of Lincoln further strengthened his concern at the failure of early sixteenth-century monasteries to hold their founders' ideals. More than half of the forty-eight monasteries inspected revealed serious faults, ranging from a lack of vocations, as at Livinghoe which could muster a mere four nuns, to the undoubtedly scandalous state of affairs at the Leicester Augustinian priory of St Mary in the Meadows, where, under a lax prior, the monks left the enclosure when they wished, ate at their pleasure, and kept hunting dogs and horses within the monastic confines. Institutions such as these proved to be beyond the bishop's powers to reform.

As a hammer of the heretics, however, Longland gained more success. Directing attention to the "Children of the Devil" who had entrenched themselves in the diocese, he hunted heresy hunters to have driven the local

population into outward conformity in the University of Oxford, of which he became chancellor on Warham's death in 1532, he also (at least until 1530s) seems to have been effective in curbing the dissemination of Protestantism, intervening with an obvious sense of urgency to crush an outbreak of Lutheranism at Wolsey's new college in the early months of 1528.

In contrast with his personal involvement with monastic reform and the extirpation of heresy, Longland normally delegated his parochial oversight to deputies. Despite this, most of the very numerous parishes were reasonably served by their incumbents, two-thirds of whom lived in their parishes, and just over a third of whom were graduates, though these graduate priests were usually the ones who did not reside. Those who actually undertook the cure of souls may well have received only a basic education, but they seem to have been ministering the sacraments adequately and generally to have been regarded as satisfactory by their congregations. Anglican clericalism seems to have been minimal.

The acts of the Reformation Parliament in consequence descended upon a diocese quite unprepared for drastic change. Longland himself supported the divorce and the royal supremacy but continued profoundly conservative in theology. Henry VIII solved his problem of uncommitted religious by dissolving all monastic houses, whether zealous or not. The supreme head of the church also somewhat alleviated the bishop's difficulties in supervising so immense a diocese by dividing it into two new sees of Peterborough and Oxford. By a skilful use of patronage and by his adamant refusal to allow Protestant preaching within the diocese, Longland until the very end of his life contrived to curb the spread of heresy. Only at the time of the Pilgrimage of Grace, when in part of Lincolnshire priests and people combined against what they saw as the unjustifiable intrusion of both monarch and bishop, does Longland's touch seem momentarily to have faltered.

This temperate and meticulous study, beautifully presented by the Cambridge University Press, like other recent diocesan histories amplifies the conservatism of the see of Lincoln, which could in no sense be said to have adopted Protestantism by the time of the death of Henry VIII. Indirectly it confirms the importance of the royal supremacy in English sixteenth-century religious history; had Henry VIII not been followed by a Protestant son and he, after the Catholic restoration of Mary, by another Protestant monarch, then England might well never have left the Catholic fold. Now new investigations are needed, as much as an urban or diocesan level, into those areas where Protestantism was being propagated in the latter part of the reign of Henry VIII and that of Edward VI, which may help to explain how an England almost universally Catholic in 1529 had been transformed by Elizabeth's death into an emphatically Protestant country.

The Elizabethan Cold War

By Patrick Collinson

WALLACE T. MACCAFFREY:

Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572-1588

530pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £28.20 (paperback), £10.80.

0 691 05324 3

There has never been a better time than the 1970s and early 1980s to savour the international politics of the equivalent decades of the sixteenth century, an age when, as J. H. Elliott has observed, the powers of Europe were willing enough to wound but mortally afraid to strike. To call the Netherlands Philip II's Vietnam is an inescapable cliché. By proxy, responses to revolutions and counter-revolutions aroused by ideological sympathy or mere self-preservation, were the order of the day. And the cause, then as now, was a deterrent, powerful if less than ultimate: the unacceptable cost, financial and political, of open and unrestrained warfare, which imposed a high degree of deviance on the conduct of international and interdynastic affairs.

When Queen Elizabeth refused further aid and comfort to the Dutch Sea Beggars in 1572, was that intended as a friendly gesture towards the king of Spain or not? Its immediate consequence was the seizure of the port of Brill by the rebels, its more remote result the prosecution of an eighty-year war against the Spaniards and the eventual emergence of an independent Dutch republic. The Armada was already approaching the Channel in the summer of 1588 as English and Spanish commissioners sat around a table, ostensibly to negotiate a truce and even a treaty of peace. The historian who asks whether Elizabeth and the duke of Parma were in earnest in these transactions may wonder whether he betrays his naïveté by even posing such a question.

Compared with our own experience, the politics of the later sixteenth century were even less predictable in their course and more unstable in their conduct. The fabric was looser, communications were unsatisfactory, the notion of public service and responsibility was less clear-cut, dependence upon the vagaries of personality more absolute. It is necessary to forget modern political science in order to understand the career of a figure like François de Valois, duke of Anjou. Anjou was the brother of the king of France and heir to the French throne. But when he was engaged to play a role in the Netherlands by the representatives of the seventeen distinct provinces which composed the political map of this troubled region, it was unclear what that role was to consist of, and uncertain whether it would be undertaken in the interest of the French crown, or of the States (themselves in great disarray), or in

collusion with the viceroy of the king of Spain, who still claimed sovereignty, or, as proved to be the case, in pursuit of private ambitions.

Why mention "this odd fellow" (as a contemporary English writer calls him) in connection with the foreign policy of Queen Elizabeth I? Because it seems to that virgin sovereign in her forty-sixth year that the security and future prosperity of her realm depended absolutely upon her marrying Anjou, or at the very least engaging with him, placing all her eggs in this improbable and, as it presently appeared, thoroughly rotten basket. Simultaneously, Scotland a stable government favourable to English interests was overthrown upon the arrival of another French adventurer, Esmé Stuart, sieur d'Aubigny, cousin and first of several worthless favourites of the twelve-year-old James VI. This was how the world appeared from England, in about 1582.

The subject of Wallace T. MacCaffrey's new book, which provides a sequel to *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (1968), is the progressive hotting up of the Elizabethan Cold War, stopping just short of the cleansing and resolving confrontation of 1588. Three hundred of its 500 pages concern foreign policy, and within this major section attention rarely wanders from the central preoccupation of the Netherlands. The only aspects of domestic politics extensively discussed are those bearing most directly upon policy in the sense of religion, which dominates the first section of the book, "The Domestic Scene", to the exclusion of all other topics; and the institutional and human aspects of the formation and criticism of policy, in Court, Council and Parliament. It would be pointless to blame Professor MacCaffrey for failing to write some other kind of book, dealing, for example, with Elizabethan social or commercial policy. What he has given us is the most intelligent and enlightening account yet written of the English involvement in events which, for all their apparent confusion and even irrationality, determined the long-term future of North-West Europe.

His book is also a fine example of what may be called historian's etiquette: which consists of standing helpfully and discreetly beside the reader rather than obstructing his view of the subject. MacCaffrey is a more active and critical interpreter of the diplomatic sources than Conyers Read in his monumental studies of Walsingham and Burghley. But, on the other hand, he eschews the indignant polemics of Charles Wilson, whose indictment of English policy in *Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands* (1970) was extreme in its interpretation. MacCaffrey's judgment is as dispassionate as his style is elegant. As we know from his earlier writings, his admiration for Elizabeth I is

tempered by recognition of her instinctive and incurable conservatism, arising, as he believes, from a singular lack of ideals or even conventional royal ambitions; and by his lively sense of what he calls her "wayward temperament". And if, on this occasion, he draws attention to the unwelcome resolve which the Queen brought to the direction of affairs around 1580, the years dominated by Anjou, it is only to find that the diplomacy of this period was "fundamentally misconceived". When war came at last, it was under the most unfavourable circumstances which could have been contrived. But unlike Wilson, MacCaffrey never loses sight of the fearful odds against which any English policy towards the Netherlands, and above all a forceful, courageous policy, would have had to contend. "England could not risk open war with Spain on behalf of an ally which might at any moment cease to exist." Perhaps because of Vietnam, he is less ready than Wilson to indulge in pipe-dreams about lost opportunities: a united Dutch state gratefully indebted to its English godmother, a *pax Batavica* in North-West Europe, no Blenheim, no Waterloo! And without Wilson's expectations, he is more ready to believe that the historian encounters in the state papers, and even in Burghley's irritatingly Delphic memoranda, is something rational which it may not be altogether absurd to call a policy: albeit a largely reactive policy.

But who made that policy? MacCaffrey's title may suggest a thorough if not conclusive attack on this most recalcitrant but rewarding problem in Elizabethan history. However, one comes to the end of a long book feeling that the author has expressed what we already knew supremely well but has scarcely added to our knowledge. Wilson has written: "By English policy we mean the Queen's policy... The Council might propose; the Queen decided." MacCaffrey endorses this analysis. "Every move in the complex interplay of events was hers." At each stage the architect of policy was unmistakably the Queen. If policy means decisions transmitted and implemented, it is impossible to quarrel with these statements, which – applied to the operations of the Tudor monarchy – amount to a truism. But they tell us little about the making of policy, in the sense either of policy executed or of policy proposed but subsequently rejected, perhaps tacitly, by inaction. In September, 1571, the correspondent of the English ambassador in the Low Countries reported that the earl of Leicester was to come over with an army, to the aid of the States: "This is his full determination, but yet unknown unto her Highness."

The course of events, and the Queen's response to events, determined that there should be no expeditionary force, at least not for

another eight years, when Leicester set sail in altogether different and less favourable circumstances. Yet the implication that such momentous plans might be laid while "yet unknown unto her Highness" sends us with particular interest to MacCaffrey's penultimate chapter on "The Politician". How far were they the policy makers? But what we find in this account of the leading members of the régime is familiar, even predictable. There were four Elizabethan Privy Counsellors who can fairly be called politicians: Burghley, Leicester, Walsingham and Hatton. Walsingham was a wholehearted ideologue. Hatton was his antitype, talented but uncluttered by high principle. Burghley was the dynamo who kept the business of government running smoothly and effectively, but as to what he thought about policy, he remains a noncommittal enigma.

That leaves Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. MacCaffrey's earlier study traced the transformation of the mere favourite, the "joker in the pack", into a statesman of substance. There was some expectation that the rehabilitation of the earl, a greatly underestimated figure, would be a major theme of this second volume, which covers the years of Leicester's maturity and maximum authority. In the event we find less than ten pages devoted specifically to Leicester's political reputation and qualities. Here he is called, as Conyers Read or even Sir John Neale would never have called him, "the most audacious" (as well as "restless") of Elizabethan politicians. His importance, here and elsewhere in the book, is seen to reside in his patronage of the committed, even radical Protestant/Puritan tendency. "He comes closer to something resembling a party leader than any other Elizabethan politician. Even his failure in the Netherlands is seen as in some ways pardonable: a far cry from Wilson's denunciation of Leicester as representing 'all that was worst in the politics and culture of the English Renaissance'."

But the hidden implications of Leicester's role on the Elizabethan political scene, and specifically in the formation of policy, are only lightly touched upon. This may be because MacCaffrey devotes more space to Leicester's patronage of Puritan clerics than to his political alliances, and since he tends to identify Puritanism with "left-wing" opposition rather than with the forward thrust of militant Protestantism (expressed, for example, in the fiercely anti-Catholic literary prefaces addressed to the earl) this suggests a wasteful dissipation of Leicester's powers and opportunities. By contrast, the extraordinary predominance among middle-rank diplomats of zealous Protestants related to the Leicester-Walsingham axis is a fact mentioned but not explored, while the axis itself is assumed as an elemental feature of Elizabethan political life but not much investigated.



A portrait of Eleanor of Toledo, a painting from the sixteenth-century Florentine school of Alessandro Allori, was offered for sale by Christie's, 502 Park Avenue, New York, on January 19.

MacCaffrey's final chapter on Parliament is a brilliant and suggestive essay on the political maturation of the Elizabethan House of Commons, building upon Neale rather than on the recent and continuing work of revision undertaken by G. R. Elton and his pupils, but sharing some Eltonian insights. It is here that we glimpse, almost for the first time in the book, the possible extent of the submerged iceberg which the very caution of MacCaffrey's scholarship has so often skirted around in earlier chapters. For Elizabethan policy was, after all, a topic of "wide public concern", of interest to "a formed public opinion", and, in the 1580s, the parliamentary oratory of ministers like Hatton and Midway was a frank recognition of that fact. There are also strong hints of the possibility that Commons initiatives on matters of public concern were not so much expressions of spontaneous and almost irresponsible "opposition" as visible tokens of contention throughout the political culture, running both to and from the Court and the Council. MacCaffrey draws attention to fruitful cooperation on somewhat equal terms between councillors and parliament men: "collaborative rather than manipulative strategies". And in an earlier chapter, on the Anjou marriage negotiations, he finds at least one example of that collaboration working to the frustration of the Queen's evident intent to make an unpopular marriage. "The shipwreck of the Queen's matrimonial plans illuminated the limits of her power within her own realm."

Professor MacCaffrey has written a masterly account of the unfolding of mid-Elizabethan policy. But it remains to some future historian, more adventurous and speculative, to penetrate, if he can, a little deeper into the folds of what he himself calls "the winding intricacies of Elizabethan policy-making."

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The capital per caput

By Valerie Pearl

ROGER FINLAY:
*Population and Metropolis:
The Demography of London 1580-1650*
188pp. Cambridge University Press.
£22.50.
0 521 22535 3

There are many unsettled problems about the population of London in its "take-off" period, during which, in an exceptional burst between 1580 and 1650, the number of inhabitants more than doubled in just over two generations. There is no way of knowing the precise figures, of course, nor do we fully understand the reasons for this phenomenal expansion. Reliable answers, if they could be given, would illuminate not only our knowledge of the metropolis but much of the history of the country, upon which the capital exercised great influence.

London is exceptionally rich in the extent of its surviving documentary records. Nevertheless, we lack adequate sources for estimating with accuracy the population of the city and its suburbs before the eighteenth century, and even for that century we have to be content with insufficient evidence until the first census was taken in 1801. Population figures have had to be constructed, sometimes highly speculatively, from partial records with the aid of mathematical formulae and model life-tables derived from nineteenth and twentieth-century vital statistics, and have found justification if not verification by comparison with statistical data derived for the populations of other large European cities.

The problems which face the would-be historical demographer of late sixteenth-century London are especially formidable. How can we calculate the birth and death rates and thus the size of the population from imprecise records, how reliable and complete are the bills of mortality, the parish registers and the occasional listings of inhabitants, from all of which demographers have learnt how to "reconstitute" families through a number of successive generations; what calculations can be made for the even more poorly recorded suburbs, widely believed to be growing faster than the centre; how to estimate the size and composition of the body of migrants from the countryside and other towns which the author of this book thinks replenished and augmented the population decisively; how big were the apprentice and other unmarried adult male sectors of London's population and what were the ratio of men to women and the average age of marriage for the two sexes; how high were marital fertility, illegitimacy and infant mortality; what proportion of infants was sent to nurse both within the city and in the country, and how did this practice affect mortality and birth rates; what differences of wealth existed between Londoners in various parishes and how did social and economic class affect life expectancy?

To none of these questions can fully confident, unequivocal answers be given, and sometimes it must be admitted, imagination is needed to fill the gaps. Qualification, where it is attempted, needs to be hedged around with qualification. Yet within such constraints historical demographers who have done much in recent years to elicit the size and growth of rural populations are turning their attention to the populations of the larger towns and cities. Roger Finlay's *Population and Metropolis* is an important interim contribution to that debate. He has analysed the internal demography of London for a period of (chosen mainly because eighteenth-century parishes have records suitable for his purpose) only from around 1580 to the middle of the seventeenth century, when the growth of independence, the deterioration in the bills of mortality and the upheavals caused by the Civil War all contributed to a

decline in the quality of data from which reliable statistical conclusions can be drawn. Amid much speculation, rough figures for the overall population now find wide acceptance, subject to where the boundaries of London are drawn. In the early seventeenth century, the number of inhabitants in the greater area is believed according to the best estimates, to have doubled from just below 200,000 in 1600 to nearly 400,000 by 1650. It is also widely accepted that this remarkable expansion was made possible by continuous and massive migration to the capital, although a more refined version, not fully discussed by Finlay, challenges the assumption that the city was an infernally unhealthy place where, to quote Finlay, "the birth rate could not keep pace with the death rate and migration prevented the population from falling".

Finlay's short book has over one hundred tables and graphs, but he admits to its somewhat limited nature and makes modest claims for it on the whole, although one caveat at the opening sentence that "this is the first study of the population of London during the early modern period", a few pages further on he himself pays tribute to the work of John Graunt, the father of all London demographers, whose pioneering book was first published in 1662 and raised many of the problems discussed here. The period covered by Finlay is short, only a small sample of parish registers was studied and although these included both very rich and very poor districts it was found that their social composition was more varied than "such generalizations might suggest"; moreover,

the sample did not include any of the suburbs and Finlay suggests (without giving any evidence) that the "demographic experience of the suburbs lay between the extremes of fertility and mortality" reported for the sampled parishes from the inner city.

Despite the interim nature of his findings, some valuable conclusions emerge. The accuracy of the eight London parish registers chosen as a sample is apparently of a high standard, and an important concomitant to this is the relatively high degree of persistence of residence, defined as the proportion of the population that stayed in the same parish for ten years, thus giving greater credibility both to the reconstitution of London families and to the belief that the stability of the city's population has been underestimated. In a chapter on the general growth of the population Finlay gives two especially important causes for its fast acceleration at the beginning of the period. First was London's unique size among the country's larger towns; in marked contrast, by 1750, the number of these had grown sufficiently for there to be far more possible destinations for migrants. Second, the growth of population in London was related to changes in the economy of the whole country, the capital depending upon a regular supply of migrants even to maintain its size.

Turning to London's social structure, Finlay bases an analysis of the distribution of wealth in his eight parishes on a listing of tithesayers made in 1638, which is tested for accuracy by comparing it with other surveys made by vestrymen and

churchwardens and with the reconstituted heads of families taken from the parish registers. About one-third of the 1638 tithesayers were not in the parish registers, which he thinks may be attributable to childless couples who could not be reconstituted by him (though so large a percentage of infertile marriages would surely have had a most marked effect on the very high birth rate) or it may show, Finlay reflects, "the fluidity of London society", a conclusion which appears to contradict his earlier verdict on its stability.

In summing up his findings on the distribution of wealth he writes that "although the social structure of London was complicated, with no simple connections between it and the spatial form of the city, people of similar means lived close to each other... The wealthier Londoners tended to live in the centre of the city whilst the poor were more likely to occupy the peripheral areas around the walls and along the river-side. The residence of the majority... of intermediate means was less well defined."

Other questions discussed here relate to the impact of plague epidemics (held to have had no great effect on the surge of population); child-care practices, in which the extent and effect of wet nursing is considered and not very convincingly quantified; the comparatively large and sickly body, thought to have reached 15 per cent of the population in the period in question and providing, by its system of long apprenticeships, a partial cause for late marriages; the small effect of London's foreign community, whose

numbers tended to be much exaggerated by contemporaries; and a useful discussion of why some parts of London appeared to be healthier than others, although this cannot have caused the river-side parishes to grow from the late sixteenth century onwards. Two Thames engines piped river water under pressure to the rich and to the northern parishes around Cornhill.

There are only a few small errors of this kind in *Population and Metropolis* but they may serve to indicate that if good demographic history cannot be written without slide-rules, mathematical formulae, hypothetical life-tables and reconstituted families, neither can one afford to neglect more traditional studies. But the statistical method too requires care in asking the right questions. This work deserves to be regarded as a valuable contribution to the debate about London's population, but one of its central premises, which is that migration made good an otherwise declining population, leaves unexplored the composition of the migrants themselves, and such questions as how long they stayed in the city and at what periods. Can some be regarded as temporary and others as permanent residents, and what professions, occupations and rates of marriage, fertility and mortality should be assigned to them? More detailed investigation is called for also into another apparently fundamental premise - the inability of both natives and migrants to replace themselves. In the wealthy parishes, Finlay reports an astonishingly high age-specific marital fertility exceeding 500 live births per thousand women-years lived. Fertility rates as high as these have not been reported for English rural parishes. Mortality, it is also demonstrated, was low in these wealthy parishes. Plainly, the assumption that natural increase was nowhere sufficient to increase the population needs deeper examination.

Even the Lords, however, sometimes deviated into "opposition". Religious conservatives, lay and episcopal, opposed the Edwardian prayer-books. The climax came, however, in Mary's reign, in 1554, when one of the Queen's leading ministers, William Paget, instigated successful opposition against the "Parliamentary programme of the Lord Chancellor, Bishop Gardiner. All this, Graves suggests, set a bad example to the Commons, which indulged in its own oppositional extravagance the following year. "The year 1555 marks the parliamentary nadir of the reign." The Lords carried the scars for some time via a reduced share in initiating bills, and a lower success rate.

In "simple quantitative terms of productivity" the East German Volkshammer no doubt scores very high. But opposition could sometimes prevent, for instance, in forcing the abandonment of a treason charge against Bishop Tunstall. Parliament could not act in the national interest, as when it prevented Mary's scheme to have her husband, King Philip, crowned as King of England, a ceremony which might have tempted him to claim the throne for himself on Mary's death. It is not clear where Graves stands on such issues. But the impatience shown by the "revisionists" for the Whiggish glorification of "opposition" leads to a view of English history which is as distorted, perhaps even more so, as that of their opponents: one in which dissent is merely fabulous, and the defence of traditional liberties a sham.

POLITICS

Democracy on the map

By Kenneth O. Morgan

MICHAEL KINNEAR:
*The British Voter
An Atlas and Survey since 1885*
173pp. Batsford. £20.
0 7134 3482 1

British political history has usually concerned maps rather than maps. Geographical techniques have been under-used as tools for research by students of the economic, social and demographic basis of British electoral behaviour. An exception, however, is the Canadian scholar Michael Kinnear's political atlas, *The British Voter*, which has been a useful aid for political historians and psephologists since it was first published in 1968.

The staple feature of the new edition remains a series of maps illustrating general election results since 1885. In addition, there are sections on the effects of the redistribution of constituencies in 1918, and on differential turn-out in somewhat arbitrarily selected elections, on the varying fortunes of the local party machinery of the Liberals (Asquithian and Lloyd George), Unionists and Labour in the light of the electoral upheavals associated with the Lloyd George coalition in 1918-22; on the distribution of mining and agricultural votes, on the middle-class electorate and on the extent of religious nonconformity in 1921; and on the national particularisms of Scotland and Wales. The incidental commentaries on each map, while

brief, are sometimes informative. The main new feature of this edition is section VI, which covers the general elections of 1970 to 1979, the referenda on the Common Market and on devolution in Scotland and Wales, together with Ulster Unionism and Scottish nationalism in the 1970s and the first elections to the European parliament in June 1979.

Most of the limitations of the first edition recur, unimproved and uncorrected. In particular, there is a quite excessive emphasis on the events of 1918-24, a unique phase of four-party politics on which Professor Kinnear's research has been almost exclusively based. Lloyd George, charismatic and beguiling though he remains, is misleadingly dominant. The details of the activity of Lloyd George Liberal constituency parties in 1922-23, while fascinating to the enthusiast (of which the present reviewer is certainly one), are of very marginal relevance to a general survey such as this: in any case, since the details are drawn uncritically from the *Lloyd George Liberal Magazine* without reference to any other source, the material provided is of very questionable value.

The discussion of electoral data before and after 1918-24 is much less authoritative, and many errors still intrude. The party schisms of 1886 and 1931 are covered far less rigorously or reliably than that of 1922 (where the information is not impeccable either). The handling of Labour politics prior to 1914, an egregious area in the first edition, remains extremely slipshod. Indeed, precisely what the author means by

"Labour" in the 1885-1914 period is unclear, since he seems not to understand the basic difference between "Lib-Lab" and LRC candidates. Thus in the 1885 election, the author lists five "Labour" MPs (all Lib-Labs - in fact, the correct total is eleven), but none whatsoever in 1886 or 1895. In 1892, Keir Hardie is bracketed with the Lib-Labs. Two "Labour" members pop up in Wales in 1901 (apparently those meant are Keir Hardie in Merthyr Tydfil, a Socialist who was LRC-sponsored, and "Mabon" in the Rhondda, an old-fashioned Liberal miner whom Kinnear has ignored for the previous fifteen years). In 1906, both tables and maps merge the LRC and the Lib-Labs into the same total of 54. The unwary beginner would not gather that the miners were not affiliated to the Labour Party until three years later. Nor would the account of the two 1910 elections help, since the Lib-Lab totals in each case include Lib-Labs as well. Here the comments on the influence of social reform upon the working class vote in 1910 are almost absurd. The whole thing is a great muddle. Indeed, the Labour Party is a field where Kinnear is distinctly shaky throughout, and where he has not corrected old mistakes, many of them quite elementary. As for the Liberals, they fare little better, since the total number of seats given for 1922 is incorrect, while the 1935 electoral map confuses the supporters of Samuel and the Welsh group of "Independents" who followed Lloyd George, an error perpetuated from the first edition.

The new section VI is distinctly

impressionistic in its comments on the politics of the 1970s, interesting though the maps themselves are. Among the errors, it ought to be noted that not every Liberal MP supported British membership of the EEC in 1975, while the forty-percent rule in the 1979 devolution referendum is mis-stated. The notes and bibliography have not been updated with sufficient care and thoroughness. It is especially surprising, given the prominence of the 1918 redistribution of seats in this atlas, that several important articles in academic journals since 1976, dealing with the repercussions of the 1918 Reform Act, are omitted. Many major works covering recent electoral history that were published in the 1970s are also left out (Paul Addison's *Road to 1945*, to take one of the more obvious examples). The author's overall view, in his introduction, that British scholars have neglected to show a close interest in the social background of electoral behaviour, a reasonable enough judgement in 1968, is distinctly less appropriate now. The student should handle this book with some care, therefore, and with constant reference to other, more authoritative works (for instance, F. W. S. Craig's books of electoral statistics). Nevertheless, the charm and clarity of the maps, and the data, lucidly assembled, survive in full. This book continues to be an attractive, if somewhat flawed, guide to the local and regional variations of British political experience in the democratic phase.



En route for Norwich in the general election campaign, Lloyd George stood on a pair of steps flanked by porters to address a crowd at Cambridge railway station, December 3, 1923.

Power in proportion

By Ian Bradley

VERNON BOGDANOR:
*The People and the Party System
The referendum and electoral reform in British politics*
284pp. Cambridge University Press.
£20 (paperback, £6.95).
0 521 24207

One of the most pleasing side-effects of the formation of the Social Democratic Party has been the renewal of interest at both the popular and academic level in political and constitutional theory. Serious political treatises by Shirley Williams and David Owen are prominently displayed on the shelves of W. H. Smith's. Mrs Williams' book even climbed into the best-seller lists for a time. Scarcely since the days of penny editions of the works of J. S. Mill can there have been such public appetite for the philosophical musings of politicians.

Vernon Bogdanor's splendid new book represents the scholarly end of the same phenomenon, although that should not deter the general reader, for it is written in an admirably clear and easy style. It also has a more than usually strong topical interest. Dr Bogdanor, one of the many members of the Oxford PPE faculty to have "gone SDP" in 1981 (in his case coming over from the Conservatives rather than the more common Labour route), is acting as secretary to the joint SDP/Liberal commission recently set up to examine the whole question of reform of the constitution. While it would be wrong to take his remarks on the subject in this book as a manifesto for the Alliance, they do provide some clear pointers to the way that the commission is likely to be thinking.

In content and style, *The People and the Party System* far surpasses the generality of contemporary academic studies of politics and the constitution. It stands rather in that fine British tradition of constitutional history of which the chief exemplars are A. V. Dicey and Walter Bagehot. There is something splendidly and refreshingly Victorian about Bogdanor's clarity, his wide and illuminating historical perspective, and

above all, his forceful and infectious enthusiasm.

His book is a plea for the wider use of the referendum and for the introduction of proportional representation. The case for both these reforms is based ultimately on the argument that they will diminish the sovereignty of party and increase the sovereignty of the individual elector. Although Bogdanor deploys the usual arguments about the unresponsive and adversarial character of the present constitutional set-up, it is on the Victorian Liberal principle of representative democracy as the self-government of individuals that he essentially rests his case.

Personally, while I am certain that the application of this principle must lead to advocacy of proportional representation, I am much less sure that it logically leads to a demand for more referenda. Bogdanor himself points out that historically in this country, far from being perceived as an instrument of popular sovereignty, the referendum has usually been taken up by reactionary politicians who saw it as a way of checking disagreeable and generally progressive legislation. Thus its most fervent advocates have been Liberals who opposed Home Rule, Conservatives who opposed tariff reform, Socialists who opposed the Common Market and devolution to Scotland and Wales, and, one might add, Environmental Secretaries opposed to high-speed rail authorities.

Widespread recourse to referenda would, in fact, challenge the principle of representative democracy just as much as the devices of reselection and accountability of MPs and councillors to party members that the SDP find so offensive. Bogdanor admits that the value of the referendum is limited and that it could not do much to secure popular involvement in social and economic matters. That seems to leave only strictly constitutional, and perhaps moral issues, and even there, I wonder whether, with proportional representation, the use of referenda would in fact substantially increase the say and enhance the power of the individual elector in the way that he rightly wants to see happen.

The argument for proportional representation is much more convincing. Indeed, I have seldom seen

it better put than in this book. Guided by his Victorian Liberal principles, Bogdanor comes down in favour of the single transferable vote because it represents the opinions of electors rather than the geographical community in which they happen to live, as in our present first-past-the-post or plurality system, or their party allegiance, as in the list system used in West Germany.

Bogdanor has a positively Millite enthusiasm for the educative effects which the introduction of the single transferable vote would have on the minds and independent spirits of the British electorate. One feels, in fact, that he only just falls short of accepting Thomas Hare's original conception of the STV as allowing individuals to choose their parliamentary representatives from any part of the country on the grounds that particular opinions could not conceivably be confined to specific geographical boundaries. He does not pursue this delightful notion, however, and contents himself with the more commonly accepted solution of multi-member constituencies.

If there is one argument against proportional representation that this book demolishes finally and utterly it is that old chestnut about severing the traditional links of the MP with his constituency. For a start, as Bogdanor points out, there is nothing very traditional about these. Until 1885 the basic unit of representation in the United Kingdom was the multi-member constituency with three or four MPs. He goes on to show how our present electoral system actually diminishes the representation of locality by encouraging parties to define political issues in broad class terms.

The reader of this book is left realizing that the only real argument against proportional representation is summed up in Peel's response when it was first suggested in Parliament in 1831: "it is an idea by which the country might have benefited but the Party not". The Liberals failed to introduce electoral reform when they were strong enough to do so because they saw "it as not being in their party interest". Let us hope for all our sakes that the Social Democrats do not go the same way if they find that the present system is quite capable of bringing them to power.

Listing the lawmakers

By C. S. L. Davies

MICHAEL A. R. GRAVES:
*The House of Lords in the Parliaments of Edward VI and Mary I
An Institutional Study*
321pp. Cambridge University Press.
£22.50.
0 521 23678 9

Rescuing the House of Lords from the neglect into which it has, allegedly, fallen at the hands of historians ranks high on the agenda for the self-proclaimed school of "revisionists", of which Michael Graves is a vociferous proponent. His imagery is read, "In the mid-sixties" we unfurled, "the banner of revisionism", mixing his metaphors, "the early revisionists fired wide or short of the mark". Their target is the tradition, "handed down, like the keys of the kingdom, from A. F. Pollard to Noelstein, Conyers Read and J. E. Neale". These scholars are accused of indulging in an "over-riding and wrong-headed concern with the politics of parliament", and especially with "opposition". The readiness to obstruct the royal will becomes a test generally indicted in obstruction much less than the Commons, and so excited less interest among ambassadors and other commentators. Historians have therefore compounded their sin by developing a "Commons fixation". Renouncing the Whiggish temptation to heroic history, the "revisionists" insist that attention should be focused on how the two Houses dealt with their mutual problems, in co-operating with that crown in

the making of legislation. In this context the Lords will receive "its just recognition".

Distaste for the style of Mr Graves's polemic should not blind us to the essential truth of much of his case. The "grinding, tedious, and enervating" involved in constructive legislation is important. We need to know much more about the origin of bills and the changes which those of them which became act underwent in the course of their passage. A thorough understanding of procedure is essential for the understanding of the story from rather scanty evidence means that Graves has set himself an impossible task in studying the Lords as an institution during the brief but momentous reigns of Edward VI and Mary. There was a well-established Lords Journal, much more informative than that of the Commons (which only begins in 1547). It indicates who was present at each sitting, and how individual peers voted on controversial issues. But the study of procedure depends on confronting the Journal, and the original acts still surviving in the House of Lords Record Office, with the procedural commentaries of Elizabethan and Early Stuart writers; fair enough. In the circumstances, however, a study of the Lords over a longer period would have been more valuable. Alternatively, Graves could have brought out the particular contribution of the Lords by writing about Mid-Tudor Parliaments as such. As it is, he is in the odd position of arguing the particular contribution of one side of a partnership, without examining the partnership itself.

The case for the importance of the Lords in the legislative process is a strong one. What about any temporal peers and twenty-five bishops it was smaller, more cohesive than the Commons. Many of its members had direct experience of central government; inevitably, there was much more continuity of membership than in the lower house. The Lords had the benefit of high-powered legal advice, from judges, sergeants-at-law, and the law officers of the Crown, who sat on its committees and scrutinized bills. Over half the bills originally introduced in the Lords became law, compared to a quarter of those in the Commons. "The Lords' achievement can be spelt out in simple quantitative terms of productivity." Were Graves to examine some acts in detail, to try to determine, for instance, what differences were made by Lords' amendments, he might have been able to add a qualitative to his quantitative judgment.

Half of the book is devoted to membership, asking the questions traditionally asked of the Commons: who were the Lords? How many? What were their backgrounds? In 1547, "17% of the bishops (or 44% of the House) had attended institutions of higher learning." (The non-graduate element in the episcopacy turns out to be Bishop Barlow of St David's; and his case is less clear than Graves allows.) Graves has high standards, and is disappointed in the Earl of Arundel, "he understood Latin better than he spoke it". Attendance records during the 1547 session, while the daily attendance averaged over 57 per cent. Most absenteeism was innocuous, though a number of lords went away as a protest in Queen Mary's third year. The Crown was more concerned to have members attend (to strengthen the air of a united body) though it sometimes persuaded potential trouble-makers to stay away. Graves examines kinship ties between the peers, and the funds to which they often led, but it is impossible to relate these to the particular stance taken by

individual peers in Parliament. This highlights another weakness. If it is impossible to study the Lords apart from the Commons, so it is artificial to study the Commons, so it is artificial to study the Commons apart from the Lords. The book is a narrow Parliamentary context alone.

Even the Lords, however, sometimes deviated into "opposition". Religious conservatives, lay and episcopal, opposed the Edwardian prayer-books. The climax came, however, in Mary's reign, in 1554, when one of the Queen's leading ministers, William Paget, instigated successful opposition against the "Parliamentary programme of the Lord Chancellor, Bishop Gardiner. All this, Graves suggests, set a bad example to the Commons, which indulged in its own oppositional extravagance the following year. "The year 1555 marks the parliamentary nadir of the reign." The Lords carried the scars for some time via a reduced share in initiating bills, and a lower success rate.

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Owen Chadwick

Winner of the Wolfson Literary Award for his lifetime's contribution to the study of history.

The Popes and European Revolution

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R28 Oxford History of the Christian Church

Oxford University Press

By Anthony Burgess

DAVID W. MAURER:
Language of the Underworld
477pp. University of Kentucky Press.
Distributed in the UK by Trans-Atlantic Book Service. £22.50.
0 8131 1405 5

The late David Maurer was Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at the University of Louisville. He was one of the pioneers of the study of American cant and argot, starting his work in the wake of H. L. Mencken's *The American Language*, which asserted the separateness of the English of the United States from the tongue of the mother country. While Mencken, who was not a professional linguist, assumed the existence of a unified kind of American English, Maurer sought to emphasize an essential disunity and the absence of a central norm on the lines of the so-called "King's English". He believed that the normative approach to language taught in schools and colleges and in tradition in the motherland that was already fossilized in the eighteenth century, and a reasonable approach to American English might be in terms of American subcultures and their distinctive specialized forms of the language. Two of his former pupils have selected, from over two hundred books and papers and articles published by Maurer, a number of brief glossaries relating mainly to the criminal or sub-criminal trades. If we seem to know many of the words already, this is because a whole generation of specialist lexicographers has drawn deeply on Maurer, who never himself pursued the harmless drudgery beyond the glossarial stage, though his "Argot of the Criminal Narcotic Addict", with its seventy-odd double-columned pages, could

be classified as genuinely a pocket dictionary.

It is commonly assumed that there is, in proportion to the population, more criminality in America than in Europe. Maurer seems to accept the assumption and take some pride in it, though it is rather a pride in the linguistic wealth of the American criminal than in his antisocial enactments. European criminals, like English puritans, found a refuge in the Land of the Free, and the Mafia - which, sadly, has contributed little to the English lexicon - has turned America into a hypertrophied Sicily. But some of the organized crime of America finds no counterpart in Europe. The bootlegger and his customers equally defied the Volstead Act, which itself could be glossed as a sort of criminality, and specifically American crime may be regarded as a response to specifically American puritanism. The moonshiners, tucked away in the Kentucky hills, are technically criminals, but it is easier to accept them as exponents of American individualism. The line is always hard to draw. The point, anyway, is not how specialist argots derive from antisocial trades, but how these argots are generated and sustained by the closed nature of the social groups which use them.

Maurer, we are told, was a man well qualified for this kind of linguistic fieldwork. He was big, tough, broad-shouldered, but never to be mistaken for a cop or a fed. The law agent in the use of one patois or another, but he found it hard to unteach his pupils the furtive predatory manner of the fuzzi or pig as "China Street pig", used for as Bow Street runner in the late eighteenth century. He himself was always accepting, and the lexical fruits are in this book. He began not with criminals but with North Atlantic fishermen, from whom, working with them at the nets, he garnered not only terms like *gurry* (fish entrails),

dong (penis), *whore's egg* (a small spiny crustacean relished by Italians) and *put a face on* (spoil someone's good looks) but also peculiarities of verb morphology (*I does/durz* but he *do*). Then he fared inland to engage circuses and carnivals.

A number of the terms he picked up from showpeople in 1931 have now passed into the general American vocabulary, such as *cheaters* (spectacles), *saw-buck* (ten-dollar bill), *century* (a hundred-dollar bill), *Johnny-come-lately* (greenhorn), *hustler* (prostitute), while others already dead, such as *lig-opry* (negro minstrel), *mince* (palms), *lucky-boy* (lazy young man who lives off a boss), *his list*, like all his lists, serves to show how ephemeral much of such glossaries tend to be word-museums.

Maurer's verbal gleanings from the prostitute's trade fill a mere two pages, and he explains why. "Argots groups where there is a strong sense of camaraderie and highly developed group solidarity based primarily on prostitution, by its very low position in the hierarchy of the crime world and by virtue of its internal organization, denies the prostitute all claim to true professional status, it is obvious that professional pride is lacking in prostitutes, as is evident in their fantasies (some of which, like Dr Johnson's friend Ben Flett, they try to eternize in doggerel), a desire for conformity and poor thing, but it has, or had, customer's wife, public enemy (a customer, not necessarily a Boer, who likes cunnilingus). This must be the only trade which calls on the title of a classic play to designate one of

its activities. *She Stoops to Conquer* describes fellatio, which, by the less cultivated, may be called *Way Down South* in Dixie. Maurer persistently confuses sodomy and pederasty. He is not interested in the origins of words and phrases, which makes him no true philologist. Eric Purtridge was right to insist on providing etymologies, even when these were tentative or mere guesswork. Maurer gives us no hint, for instance, as to why a hooker who accepts coition up the dirt road is called a *turquoise*.

Before we engage genuine criminals, let us consider the language of terminology, very little of whose basis of straight translation. It is not enough to define *kerosene liquor* as "liquor contaminated by kerosene." We have to know that a teaspoon of kerosene in a one thousand gallon vat of beer will cause all the liquor to taste of itself. When the boiler is fired with kerosene the moonshiner must wash his hands carefully "after filling the pressure tank, and not allow any of his supply bags to lean against a kerosene drum while hauling them to the still site." *Horse-blanket whisky* describes a crude liquor made by covering a boiling kettle of beer with a heavy horse-blanket which is periodically wrung and by virtue of its internal organization, denies the prostitute all claim to true professional status, it is obvious that professional pride is lacking in prostitutes, as is evident in their fantasies (some of which, like Dr Johnson's friend Ben Flett, they try to eternize in doggerel), a desire for conformity and poor thing, but it has, or had, customer's wife, public enemy (a customer, not necessarily a Boer, who likes cunnilingus). This must be the only trade which calls on the title of a classic play to designate one of

The cream of the criminal world are probably the Confidence Men, whose complex skills entail a very precise mastery of conventional language but whose inner argot is colorfully arcane. The victim, as we all know, is the mark, but he is also the apple, egg, fink, cage, winchell, chump and (why?) Mr John Bates.

On him is played the big con or short con. The biggest of the big is the payoff, and the payoff is a shorthand for a whole scenario, which has been taken into a deal by which a big racing syndicate is swindled. "At first he plays a money furnished by the confidence men, then is put on the stand for the cash he can raise, felled as blown off." There is also the one which a bogus Western Union official convinces the mark that he is delaying the transmission of race results to the bookmakers long enough to the mark to place a bet after the race is run. And so on.

Maurer remembers that, while words are the daughters of men, things - which include criminal activities - are the sons of beasts. Glorifying in the plenitude of words he at the same time depletes the "major industry" which sustains America and presumably other nations will only learn to deal with its nature, which involves knowing its language. This sounds like the usual social justification of an academic obsession: in a materialist society it is often difficult to defend the pure as opposed to the applied study. Liquidated criminality and part of Maurer's occupation, that of his followers, is gone. When he says "... we have seen within the last two decades the mass invasion of a definitely criminal subculture by teenagers (and sometimes pre-teens) from the dominant culture - an invasion that has played havoc with the criminal's cultural patterns as well as his argot" it is as though he were trembling at the situation of an endangered species. Yet who could deny the nobility of his vocation or do other than praise the results of his enquiries among the jug-heavy, forgers, fero bank men, three-ball game operators, pickpockets and junkies? He was a Greene or Dekker with tenure.

FICTION

Old times in the New South

By Zachary Leader

PETER TAYLOR:
Collected Stories
535pp. Faber, with Farrar, Straus and Giroux. £9.50.

Peter Taylor is an important if not yet well-known figure in contemporary American literature, and the publication of his *Collected Stories* in Britain (twelve years after its appearance in America) was long overdue. The collection brings together twenty-one of Taylor's best short stories from four previous volumes. The most recent story, "Dean of Men", appeared in 1969; the earliest, "A Spinster's Tale", was written in the late 1930s, when Taylor was an undergraduate at Vanderbilt and later at Kenyon College. In 1977, a sixth volume of stories appeared, entitled *In the Miro District*. In addition to short fiction, Taylor has also written a novel, *A Woman of Means* (1950), two plays, *The Death of a Kinsman* (1949), and *Tennessee Day in St. Louis* (1957), and a volume of playlets entitled *Presences: Seven Dramatic Pieces* (1973). It is the stories, though, which have earned him apt comparison with Chekhov and the Joyce of *Dubliners*.

Peter Taylor is a Southern writer, and his roots in the Southern literary tradition are deep. He was born in 1917 into the Nashville *haute bourgeoisie* (the Milien of a number of his stories), and was early influenced by Allen Tate and Andrew Lytle, the novelist and editor of *The Sewanee Review*. At Vanderbilt, where the Fugitives of the so-called Southern Agrarian movement took their stand, Taylor met and befriended Randall Jarrell and Robert Penn Warren. At Kenyon, and Jarrell and another transfer student, Robert Lowell, were pupils of John Crowe Ransom. Taylor's story "1939" is a thinly veiled memoir of that period, an account of an ill-fated drive he and Lowell took from Kenyon to New York - one to which Lowell also alludes in the first of his two poems for Taylor in *History*.

Taylor's complex relation to the tradition this background fostered is helpful to an appreciation of his stories. In order to understand it, one must turn first to myth, despite the resolutely social or domestic surface of his stories, their modest refusal of any overt metaphysical or religious dimension. This myth can be traced to the 1830s, when intense Northern abolitionist propaganda was rife. The aim of the myth was to offer a proud self-image as an alternative to the Northern caricature, one in which an idealized Southern civilization provided a rural or agrarian anti-type to the crudely commercial United States. The South, according to this image, was stable, orderly, mannerly, benevolently patriarchal, and aristocratic; the North, on the other hand, was fragmented, rootless, ruthless, materialist, and plebeian.

Out of this opposition grew the dream of the "Old South", or what Taylor calls "the old times", which in turn formed the heart of a richer and more sophisticated myth in the literature of the 1920s and 1930s, especially in the writings of Faulkner and the Southern Agrarians of Nashville where Taylor grew up and was educated. These writings look back past the South's supposedly aristocratic origins to the pre-settlement wilderness, an Eden whose native inhabitants were as unspoiled and unpolished as the surroundings from which they drew their character. The white settlers who usurped and despoiled their Eden - who set themselves over and apart from it, and tried to parcel it out - did so in the name of civilization and the perfectibility of man: dangerous illusions which a true knowledge of nature and its lessons dispels.

Their sin against the land was like the later sin against the black man: an echo of the child's archetypal "loss" into a mature and isolating selfhood. This makes the Southern writer a sort of Ancient Mariner to the Northerner's preoccupied wedding Guest: a cursed and prophetic

figure whose tale of lost unity and inevitable cruelty leaves its bustling interlocutor a wiser and a sadder man.

With the rapid growth of industry in the 1920s and 1930s, and stiffer competition in agriculture from larger and more efficient farms in the soil-rich Western states, the South became conscious of an exodus from country or small town to city - one which Taylor examines in a number of stories set in this period. The old rural ways were seen to be threatened by the rise of a denatured New South; and if the forward-looking Northern ethos obliterated or ignored the truths of history, it was the Southern writer's duty to resist and defy that ethos.

The principal movements of cultural reaction into which this defiance flowed - were religious and literary, and both are embodied in the work of Taylor's teacher, John Crowe Ransom. Ransom's religious influence on Taylor seems to have

but to the depiction of what might be called public life, except when it impinges on or helps to explain the private circumstances of public men and their families.

Taylor is most deeply and honourably Jamesian, though, in the compassionate ends to which he puts his objectivity: detachment in these stories facilitates sympathy, especially for the injured and the tainted for the down-trodden wife, the fancy woman, the domestic (as in James, the victims are often women). This sympathy is also extended to the reader, through Taylor's welcoming, anecdotal manner, through the long, looping digressions, and a habit of unravelling mysteries or difficulties. Like James, Taylor locates character and significant incident in the subtlest details of speech and gesture. It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way, says James. "At the same time it is an expression of character." The

Miss Patty Bean is a maiden aunt from Thornton, one of a host of marginal figures (bachelor sons, widows, fiercely devoted nursemaids, or mummies) left behind in the dying towns. Though these figures are eccentric, Taylor's refusal to take their eccentricities at face value (which does not preclude his enjoying them) prevents us from identifying them with the grotesques of Southern Gothic. (Only three stories - "A Spinster's Tale", "The Fancy Woman", and "Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time" - have prominent Gothic overtones.) The eccentricities of Miss Patty Bean, or Miss Leonora Logan of Thomasville, or the dying Laura Nell Busby, or Miss Louisa and Mr Alfred Dorset, last of the Chatham Dorsets, are rationally explicable, ultimately in social or economic terms. Often their lives are set against the lives of those who've left (not just for Memphis or Nashville but for Atlanta, or California, or even Europe); of dutiful but dis-

Cousin Johnny would still, we suspect, be dull, mean-spirited and boring, given the rigours of his life and work. Similarly, though the old ways are invariably associated with stable families, Taylor is careful to point out their dependence on the loyalty of devoted mummies and domestics; a dependence that subtly degrades the nobility of employers and employees, just as it wrecks black families. The fierce devotion of Aunt Mumsie in "What You Hear from 'Em", perhaps the best known of Taylor's stories, is what holds the Tolliver family together, helping to link its latest generations to Thornton. But the price Aunt Mumsie pays for this arrangement is high: "because while Aunt Mumsie had been raising a family of white children, a different sort of family from hers had been raising her own children." Aunt Mumsie, however, believes that "Nothing about the old times was as good as these days, and there were going to be better times yet when Mr. Thad and Mr. Tolliver come back."

But the better times to come are also an illusion. The perfectible world for which one leaves home is nowhere to be found - not in Nashville, and certainly not in the dream world of a revitalized Thornton, to which Mr Thad (who has a prospering Ford and Lincoln agency in Memphis) and Mr Will (with an "even finer establishment" in Nashville) will never return, except to retire. In "What You Hear from 'Em", though, defiance of this reality is seen as a virtue: Aunt Mumsie's refusal of nostalgia and her vision of a better world are heroic, while it is both weak and wrong to fold oneself into the limitations of home, as does, say, Miss Patty Bean.

In "There", a similarly affecting if less well-known story, the larger implications of this defiance are anatomized. The form of the story, like many in this collection, is that of reminiscence: while sailing from Cherbourg to Southampton, Charles Varnell, a retired Southern diplomat who has long been an expatriate in England, recalls the home town of his adolescence. Though Varnell by no means romanticizes Southern society ("What else can you do but condescend to people until they have learned to wash themselves and eat with moderation"), he can seem to keep "there" out of his mind, for all his sense of the rightness of having left it. The timidity he despises in those who've stayed - their inability to reach out to a wider world of possibility - is matched by his own inability (we sense it in his anger) to accept limitation. The implications of this dilemma become clear when Varnell tells us of the life and dying of Laura Nell Busby, the girl he returned home to court in the years just after his departure for England. No moment in Taylor's fiction is richer or more complex than the end of "There", in which the two themes of home and death are woven together in a manner that reveals and ultimately refuses the tragic vision.

Varnell's refusal to give in to limitation in his own life is heroic; but it is also ineffectual: for all the distance he puts between himself and his past, "there" continues to obsess and define him. In other stories, though, the heroic gesture is seen quite differently. "Je Suis Perdu", for example, one of several stories set outside the South (but Southern in its themes and preoccupations), sees heroism as the acceptance of limitation: as coming to terms with the constraints of relationships and the inevitability of ageing. This difference, though, pales in the face of a larger similarity: Taylor's understanding of and sympathy for the claims of both courses open to the protagonist; his sense that both defiance and acceptance are right, and partial.

The doubleness of this perspective belongs to tragedy. It also returns us to the myth of the South in Faulkner and the best of the Southern Agrarians. Coming to terms with "home" in much of the most interesting Southern writing means coming to terms with a history that includes poverty, guilt, defeat, and frustration. In this sense it is a metaphor



Randall Jarrell, Robert Lowell, and Peter Taylor in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1948 (from Robert Lowell, *Life and Art* by Steven Gould Axelrod, Princeton University Press)

Punishment lines

By John McCarthy

JACK HENRY ABBOTT:
In the Belly of the Beast
Letters from Prison
166pp. Hutchinson. £6.95.
0 09 147330 6

This unusual book is a collection of letters written by a long-term inmate of United States prisons. It describes the violence of the penal system, and the philosophy of life that Jack Abbott has evolved as a consequence. I am the Governor of a British prison, and for myself I found this penetrating yet twisted piece of writing very disturbing. I am too much part of the beast, it served to remind me of that.

I cannot tell how much of Abbott's account of physical brutality in American prisons is fact or fantasy, nor, simply as a reader, do I believe this distinction to be important to the book. What is important is the result of his experiences and how during his life he has preserved some form of identity, however distorted it may be, in the face of extreme deprivation. The flame that burns from this book is his tremendous anger, "anger I am not even conscious of buried within me", an anger, often repressed, that comes out in his stammer, his depression, in his remark "I became the little boy being his immature, ill-controlled side). This anger is used to defend his split internal world, the desperate, violent man, the bull he describes so graphically, beside his other, gentle self, movingly depicted in the sentence "If I could violence frequently seems to express sexuality, particularly in the description of stabbing a fellow prisoner to death. He says, "You must measure your mind." His mental interior also contains his own warrior himself, a kind of Lohengrin, again with the

gentle hero alongside being "crucified", a word used several times. "The prisoner (hero) dies in shame amid contemptuous and scornful men."

Abbott keeps himself from prolonged madness by the strength of his refusal to admit otherwise and hence his adamant "No" to coming to terms with prison. This has kept him technically sane, but left him very damaged. He was twelve years old when he went inside. He tells us that in twenty-four years he has been served a total of more than fourteen years in solitary confinement. "If you hope for nothing, you can lose nothing," he says - a code of hopelessness which could only work in an environment of hopelessness, immaterial.

Abbott sees prison in any Christian society "as nothing more than death". But how far does this American book apply to the penal system in Britain today? First, there is very little physical violence from staff in our prisons, though considerable emotional violence. The relationship between staff and inmates is in general far better, being based on an implicit agreement that a quiet life is desirable for both sides; and genuine compassion and care. However, the heart of this book lies in one sentence: "A prisoner is never to resist; never contradict; never to be punished; the word is discipline. The question is whether this is inevitable, and if so whether it is brought about by the behaviour and culture of the inmates."

In the last resort, free society has to be coerced to keep the law - by the police, the courts and if necessary by the armed forces. In a place which produces a concentration of lawbreakers, the problem of control is bound to be exacerbated. So at

least a background of coercion is unavoidable. The repression is brought about by the Prison Rules, a kind of prison law. But how can staff control 450 men in a single open wing if they cannot in the last resort enforce their order and demand not to be threatened or cursed at? The reason for a disciplinary system, extra to the law of the country lies in the need to control large masses of men. In Wormwood Scrubs - in theory though not at present in practice - contain 450 men. The ideal sub-unit is thirty-five to forty-five inmates, not 450. Working in small units, staff with training are able to tolerate verbal aggression and emotional outbursts, even to tolerate some physical aggression, without resort to disciplinary charges and hence the allegation of repression.

It is not prison staff who produce the prison system of today, nor, I believe, is it on the whole the inmates. It is partly prison management, but mostly the way society, through the courts, uses the prison system, excessively as a form of punishment. Shorter sentences could be used. There are also other sanctions apparently equally effective and far less expensive. If society accuses prison staff of operating a punitive regime inside establishments, instead of following the principle that the deprivation of liberty is the punishment, then society must accept responsibility for joining in the hypocrisy of society expects prisoners as a group to be punished - the word is discipline, as "strictly treated" perhaps. Such is the nature of the beast - mine, yours and Jack Abbott's.

Jack Abbott's book is absorbing and sometimes brilliantly written. It may not be the truth about the prison system, but it is the truth about what the system has done to one very unusual, probably very difficult man. But then if he was not difficult, would anything of him have survived?

The Terminal Bar

(for Philip Haas)

The television set hung in its wire-net cage, protected from the flung bottle of casual rage, in fatish and icon providing all we want of magic and redemption, routine and sentiment. The year-old tinsels hang where an unclaimed no-hoper trembles; fly-corpses cling to the grimy fly-paper; Manhattan snows swarm on constellated waters, steam trails from warm subway ventilators. Welcome to the planet, its fluorescent beets buzzing in the desolate silence of the spheres. Slam the door and knock the snow from your shoe, admit that the vast dark at last defeated you - nobody found the grill or conquered outer space. Join the ciferate watching itself increase.

Derek Mahon

for the acceptance of human limitation, and the denial of false dreams of perfectibility. But at the same time it is also seen more positively: as a refusal of selfishness, a loving acknowledgment of kinship and relation. In "Je Suis Perdu", the protagonist, a thirty-eight-year-old American writer living for a year in Paris, falls into sudden depression. This depression occurs on the very day he finishes the book he's been working on all year; and it lifts that same afternoon, at the sight of his daughter in the Jardin du Luxembourg. But it does so in a way that puzzles and unsettles him:

He was wondering where his dark mood had gone. It was not just gone. He felt it had never been. And why had he lied to himself about this year? It had been a fine year. But still he kept thinking also of how she had interrupted his mood. . . . He found that he wanted the mood of despondency to return, and he knew that it

wouldn't for a long while. He felt he had been cheated. But this was not a mood, it was only a thought. He felt a great loss - except he didn't really feel it, he only thought of it. And he felt, he knew that he had after all gotten to Paris too late. . . . after he had already established steady habits of work. . . . after he had acknowledged claims that others had on him. . . . after there were ideas and truths and work and people that he loved better even than himself.

The tone of this passage gives full voice to all that the protagonist has lost or resigned, even as it acknowledges the wisdom and virtue of his resignation; its doubleness reveals a deep maturity, and is characteristic both of the distinctive achievement of Taylor's fiction, and of the tradition from which it comes. Though Taylor's output is slight, and in some ways narrow, it places him in the first rank of living American writers.

Words for the walking wounded

By Adam Mars-Jones

RAYMOND CARVER:
What We Talk About When We Talk About Love
159pp. Collins. £6.50.
0 00 222624 3

Raymond Carver's new book contains seventeen stories, all brief (less than ten pages each on average) and all dealing with the walking wounded of American suburbia, those who are obscurely defeated by broken marriage, accident, illness, bad bingo luck, flood and drink. His characters utter broken sentences and try to communicate their sense of loss, but articulateness is the first thing to go; expression brings them no relief.

To match his subjects Carver has devised a style of careful starkness and understatement, one which insists on its own neutrality and draws attention to its omissions. Description, character-drawing and plot-development are all forshortened, and the stories conclude as often with depressive epiphanies as with more conventional resolutions. He is rewarded with a blurb which refers to "zero-degree stories", but things aren't really as terminally modern as that.

Minimalism, after all, is a style (as artificial in its way as Henry James's maximalism) and not the opposite of a style; No Comment is rightly always classified as a comment. So when in the title story a wife, having corrected her husband's misuse of the word "vessel" (to mean *feudal dependant*), misses it herself in identical fashion, we don't need to be nudged; and when her husband accepts this implied apology for her interference by readily adopting the correct word, he completes a delicate marital negotiation that doesn't need to be spelled out for our benefit. It seems to speak for itself.

That's the trick, though: to throw your voice so that it seems to be coming from the furniture, and Carver is an expert ventriloquist. The

artificial inhumanity he adopts enables him to sidle unnoticed into areas of feeling which he couldn't approach directly.

This is partly a matter of cultural fashion. Few people nowadays would respect a book which announced *I want you to care for life's losers. For the little guy. For all of us. I want to break your heart.* But by cultivating a bleakness of manner which gives way at crucial moments to a rationed sympathy, Carver can achieve all these effects without being seen to solicit them.

Minimalism is well suited to the short-short-story form since everything is over before the diminishing returns show up; there is only so much mileage in the poetry of inarticulateness, and the day of the autistic three-decker novel is not yet. But even with a volume of stories, doubts creep in. The first few pieces seem thin and perfunctory, and there is a recurring pattern, in "Gazebo", "Sacks" and "The Calm", of endings which lurch suddenly sideways, moving off in a direction that seems almost random.

Perhaps there is a reason for this. Endings and titles are bound to be a problem for a writer like Carver, since readers and reviewers so habitually use them as keys to interpret everything else in a story. So he must make his endings enigmatic and even mildly surreal, and his titles for the most part oblique. Sometimes he over-compensates.

These reservations apply least to a run of five excellent stories in the middle of the book ("Tell The Women We're Going", "After The Denim", "So Much Water So Close to Home", "The Third Thing That Killed My Father Off", and "A Serious Talk"), where Carver really seems to hit his stride. The situations here are a little fuller and a little more conventional than elsewhere, so that Carver's restraint and scruple stand out all the more by contrast. "After The Denim", for instance, merely describes, with a characteristic neutral precision, a couple's evening out playing bingo. The story has two narrative surprises, first that the Packard's marriage is a happy one,

and second that Edith Packer is very ill. Both the characters are fully aware of these two facts; it is only the reader who is kept in ignorance, by a technique which withholds necessary information while seeming simply to reserve judgment.

The pathos of the story is enhanced by its being delayed and the reader is grateful for the few cues he is given. Carver's fiction, in fact, doesn't need to break the mould of the traditional story to achieve its effects. In the final analysis, he keeps more than he abandons.

In one story he even keeps a tone of voice which clashes with his preferred starkness; true, the narrator of "The Third Thing That Killed My Father Off" tells a tale of obsession, loss and disconnection, but he remains remarkably unaffected by it. "I'll tell you what did my father in," he begins, but having done so he ends by saying, "But as I said, Pearl Harbor and having to move back to his dad's place didn't do my dad one bit of good, either." This throwaway ending is the nearest Carver comes to exploring the comic potential of his material, and in a sense he is right to be wary of it. If any incident, properly considered, is a microcosm of defeat and loss, why insist on every moment of heartbreak? If three things can kill your father off, why not three thousand or three million?

The stories in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* use a drastic underwriting to distance the reader and then suddenly involve him, after pretending not to mind one way or the other. This technique is best suited to conventional material; it can accommodate both the lurid and the quirky, and can make tired situations seem fresh and exciting. Elsewhere it can tail off into sentimentality (as in the title story) or, worse, sickness ("Popular Mechanics"). But in a handful of fine pieces Carver's coolness pays the real dividends; his most impressive stories are as subtly rhetorical as they are shrewdly calculated, and none the worse for that.

An terrific nice girl

By George Craig

PETER DE VRIES:
Sauce for the Goose
240pp. Gollancz. £6.95.
0 575 03076 3

What monkey glands are supposed to do for ordinary people (and fictional characters), *The New Yorker* actually does for its regular contributors. This is Peter De Vries's twentieth novel and it might be his second or third. The boyish pleasure in plotting and timing a good line, the lightly-worn fastidiousness about social behaviour and speech-habits, the easy cosmopolitanism that never quite masks his happy fascination with American ways, the simple good-humour that underlies the sophistication - they are all here again as if freshly discovered.

Immediately convinced by her school-friend Effie Sniffen's casual gibe that her legs are not her father's, Daisy Sniffen spins the tale of her "real" origins: she must, she puts it to herself, be the abandoned offspring of two exquisites who, meeting at a ball in France, knew at once the perfection of their passion and the hopelessness of their plight. Where, in France? At Domblémey. Meanwhile, miraculously relieved of worries about genetic contamination, she can now enjoy the pleasure she has: Dad "high up in paving", Mom, the hammer of corporations, neglectful of consumer interests, Daisy's mixture of credulity and reasonableness, romanticism and

verbal dexterity emerges strengthened from studies at an East Coast College and a stint as a columnist for a New York magazine. Daisy is approached by Bobby Diesel (a college friend whose aggressively unfeminine dress and concerns earned her the nickname "the Lay Miserable"), who persuades her to work up a series of articles on "occupational sexual harassment" in New York offices. She accepts nervously and, after a false start, takes a lowly job on "Metropole" magazine. Here too "copy" is hard to come by; she has to go in for outright provocation (which earns her a nickname, Daisy May); then endures the whole scheme by falling in love with Dirk Dolfin, the Dutch tycoon who has acquired "Metropole", and finds that she has a rival in Effie Sniffen.

Daisy and the Diesel, Daisy and the Dolfin, Daisy and the Cause, Daisy and Effie, Daisy and Dad (and Mom); all these De Vries accounts for neatly enough at the level of plot, leaving himself free to get on with what he really wants to do - set up the exemplary Daisy so that she can act as a filter for the linguistic quirks of the others. Dirk, whose line in post-coital chat is the history of ecclesiastical schism, struggles to overcome his Dutchness by grabbing at colloquialisms. Daisy is a terrific piece of fall. Effie's misadventures include persistent misquotation, a Diesel's editorial advice is to "slice it clean and lay it on the line". Mom faces a litigious neighbour with "You just don't want to take that final step into maturity, do you?" Even someone seen only for a moment, an elderly adherent of a down-with-civilization cult, will describe the dependence fostered by conventional

religion as an "umbilical cord".

But to give examples at all is to mislead: page in, page out, it is to this kind of play, mimetic or inventive, that readership expectation looks, so that, in a final paradox, it seems as if what we are offered is a "traditional" novel of social comedy to which only rigorously "formalist" criteria apply. But not quite. De Vries, in the vagaries of speech is indeed, as it has always been, the driving force of De Vries's writing, and, in this novel, Daisy is given the means to represent it. But its obtrusiveness carries risks, and, as Effie May, then endures the whole scheme by falling in love with Dirk Dolfin, the Dutch tycoon who has acquired "Metropole", and finds that she has a rival in Effie Sniffen.

There is, too, the quite different fact that De Vries likes Daisy. And with that comes a reversal of perspective: instead of character and plot being no more than paths to pursue (something which would, given the danger of feminism, be peculiarly dangerous), verbal play and comic play of situation screen the expression of private hopes. Daisy isn't only a clever girl: she's also a nice girl. It matters to De Vries that her language, and the range of feeling that underlies it, should put her beyond the reach of Ms Diesel, of MCPs, and of the pliggery lurking even in males who escape the label.

It's an engagingly old-fashioned, kindly liberal's view and, if it's all the same to you, stay the wrath of militants: it says that Peter De Vries will take risks. And it's great fun. As Dirk Dolfin would say: "Would you have otherwise?"

JULIAN SYMONS:
Tom Adams' Agatha Christie Cover Story
144pp. Limpfield, Surrey: Paper Tiger.
£8.95.
0 905895 62 2

In designing and executing his paintings for the covers of Agatha Christie's detective stories, Tom Adams would go to as much trouble over details as the novelist herself. The blackbird for *A Pocket Full of Rye* was painted from a rotting skeleton, the tennis racket replacing the vicar's hearse for *Murder at the Vicarage* was borrowed from Duquesne's own museum, Chiswick House provided the collapsing greenhouse and the camellia for *Nemesis*, and an acquaintance loaned the skull for *The Hound of Death*, apparently with great reluctance. "He used to telephone me almost every day to ask how it was and much too soon to ask for it back." (Tom Adams's prose is less confident than his painting.) The friend was right to be anxious: Adams tells us, apropos of the rotting blackbird, that he is "irredeemably addicted to the collecting of skulls and skeletons, sometimes [sic] I am afraid, even before the flesh has decently departed from the bones. My family think the habit morbid and unattractive."

He is also "very fond of insects" (note the flies crawling over the shoeless foot of *The Body in the Library*) and has "always been fascinated by spiders" (see the cover of *Appointment with Death* where the spider emerges from the head of the girl, her scalp neatly sliced at the top like an egg, the spider's legs like a sinister arachnoid fringe). Adams has plenty of spiders about him: "After conquering an early childhood fear I have occasionally kept them as pets, mated them and raised their enormous families. This is basically the trap door spider (*Pachylomeris nidularis*) with some liberties taken." (It would have a name like the trap door spider.) He is, however, sometimes short of birds - but Adams is a resourceful fellow. Take the occasion when he was asked by the *Saturday Evening Post* to illustrate *Endless Night* when it was first serialized in America. "I wanted to do something rather special," Adams recalls, "and as I was living in London at the time with little access to dead birds I rang up the RSPCA just on the off-chance that they might have something. I was told that they had just been given the corpse of a Tawny owl which had died in mysterious circumstances without a mark on it. A night bird! This was too good a chance to miss. With great reluctance and a strange sense of doing something wrong I arranged the body and stabbed that lovely plumage in the name of realism."

One way and another a fair amount of stabbing goes on in the Adams studio; his enthusiasm is evidently contagious. The doll depicted on the cover of *Evil Under the Sun* was modelled in wax "by a young friend who was working for me at the time. He very much enjoyed painting and sticking pins in it." As for *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, "in my obsessive concern for realism I actually plunged the dagger [note the rapturous zeal of "plunger"] through my own teeth into a dummy; the only way to find out exactly what happens to cloth when you strike a dagger through it in anger. With the addition of a little red ink and the fore-runner of the files that were to hover around several of my later illustrations, I set the grisly scene. Since Adams is so particular, I am sure he will not mind my passing on a hint from a "professional": driving a dagger downwards into a jacket certainly does interesting things to the cloth but it is a very unsatisfactory way of stabbing someone in the back. The structure of the ribcage is such of the ribs, overlapping like this," said my adviser, excitedly waving his arms about that an instrument directed downwards into the back will immediately bounce off.

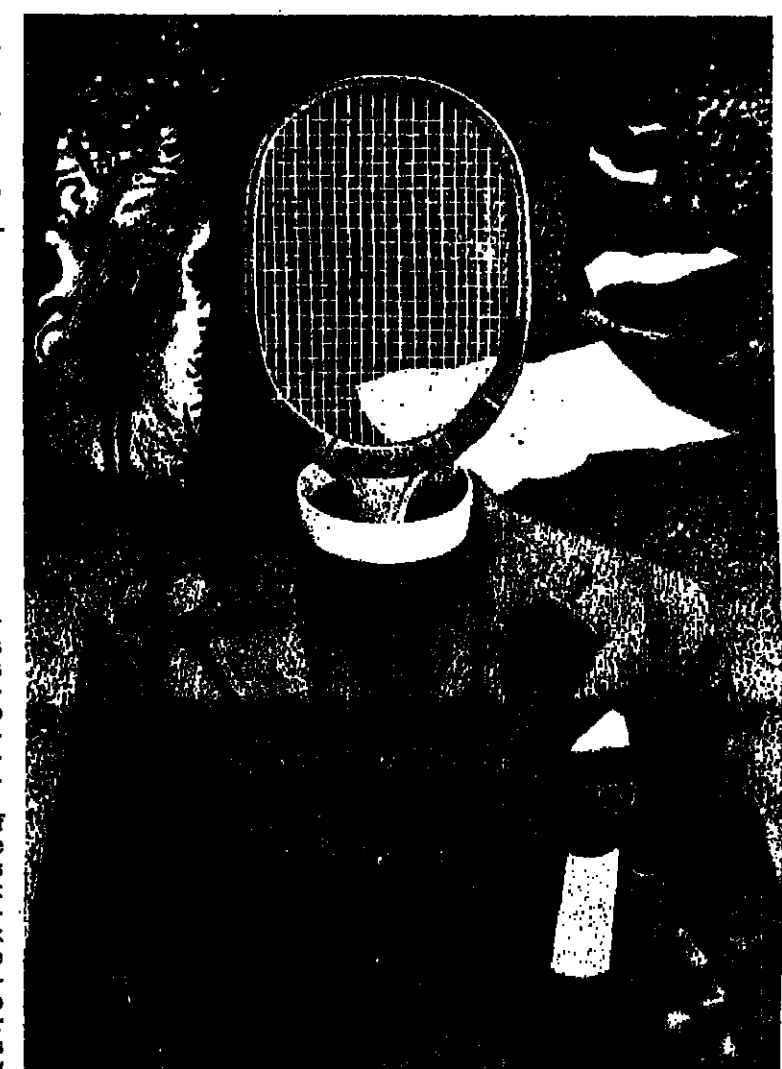
The art of murder

By Janet Morgan

Poison's age. Adams presents Symons with a little failing in the shape of a plug for his biographical studies, *The Great Detectives*, upon which of course, Symons's collaborator was Adams himself.

Another familiar face from *The Great Detectives* is our old friend Virgil Pomfret (he is, I think, Adams's agent), who inspired that work and, probably, this, here providing a rather coy preface ("Personally I owe a lot to Tom's success in those early days. . . . The international demand for his work which grew rapidly opened many doors for me"), oddly reproduced as a typed office memorandum, with apostrophes endearingly added afterwards by hand. John Fowles also intervenes, with an

Agatha Christie's detective stories themselves. His paintings are astonishingly varied in style: there is one here - *A Caribbean Mystery* - that derives from Tchelitchew, one - *Adventures of the Christmas Pudding* - like the jolly drawings from *The Wizard of Oz* (except for the robin which is tasting the blood spilt on the snow), another - *Destination Unknown* - a very dated psychedelic sixties illustration and, in its American version, with desert rocks growing into giant frogs, owing a good deal to Dali. The tennis-racket head on *Murder at the Vicarage* is inspired by Magritte, the American version of the cover for *Towards Zero*, with a stretch of choppy water and an orange-purple sky, is reminiscent



Wearing his wit in his belly and gut in his head? Tom Adams's illustration for the cover of *Murder at the Vicarage* is taken from the book reviewed here.

introduction describing how Tom Adams's talent was first recognized in 1962 when he was commissioned to produce a jacket for Fowles's novel *The Collector*. In Fowles's view, his "secret as cover-illustrator lies . . . above all in his capacity for being oblique, yet so presenting this obliquity that it constitutes a lure". It is often difficult to say why Adams's covers are menacing: "Tom never shows violence, only its aftermath, and sometimes not even that."

This is not quite right. At least three of the covers here are fairly grisly: *Lord Edgware Dies* shows the gory results of driving a knife - downwards - into the back of the head; *N or M?*, with a hammer lying in the sand, sticky with blood and "real human hair", is "another grand-guignol favourite of Mark Collins"; and, pegged on by Mark Collins, Adams gives *Murder in the Mews* a glass pane cracked by a bullet into a spider's web pattern, splashed with very juicy blood. As Adams says in discussing the toothless skulls and gigantic eyeball on the cover for *The Hound of Death* (received, with "almost childlike enthusiasm" from Mark Collins, Virgil Pomfret and Christie Bernard, the then art director), "Those were heady days at Pontana." (I do not think this deadpan remark is a deliberate pun.)

But John Fowles and, more, Julian Symons are correct in observing that the success of Adams's illustrations lies in their juxtaposition of the normal with the sinister, much like

cent of Andrew Wyeth, the American cover for *Hickory Dickory Dock* shows a lighted street somehow like those of Atkinson Grimshaw, while the nasty-looking little girl, with her long black hair, summer frock and hard spectacles, quietly writing, on the cover of the American edition of *The Crooked House*, not only "comes from an Arthur Rackham illustration" but is sitting in the same position as the Little Mermaid, only here she is sinister.

The ninety or so covers reproduced in this book are arranged according to the themes of Agatha Christie's work: "Miss Marple and Mayhem", "Poirot and Poison", "Sins of the Fathers", "Something Nasty in the Nursery", "The Darker Side of Village Life", and "Out and About With Murder". This is a graceful compliment to Mrs Christie and, thanks to Julian Symons's discreet explanatory notes and Tom Adams's introductory paragraphs (owing a lot, as he acknowledges, to Robert Barnard's *A Talent to Deceive*), the structure is effective. Nor is it so obvious that we miss other patterns, in both the illustrations and the author's work: the recurring device of the mirror; the dramatic use of perspective to mislead us into thinking the most prominent details are the most significant; the mixture of the realistic and the stylized; the presence of the supernatural (see the glorious, ectoplasmic elephant in *Elephant in the Room*; *Remember* and the spectral night-rider in *The Pale*

Horse); the extraordinary emerging from the ordinary, as spiders grow out of heads, a man's face turns into an antlered deer and a woman's into a dog, trees sprout faces, hair becomes knitting wool; the arrangement of everyday objects to make something horrid - a clock, dead violets, a newspaper cutting, or a pestle, a glass and an ancient document; and the use, in a collage, of objects that are all symbolic - a lipstick, fire-tongs, London burning, a photograph of Marilyn Monroe's white teeth and reddened lips.

The quickness of the hand deceives the eye and, just as Agatha Christie's first few pages ensnare her readers, so Adams's covers lead us on. (It is interesting that there is often a strong detail in the bottom right-hand corner of his paintings, as if to entice us to open the cover.) The illustrations in this book are beautifully shown; it is an addictive pleasure to look at these disturbing pictures. We could do, however, with more chronological detail. Pretty well all we are told is that Adams painted his first Christie cover in 1962 and that his association with Pontana lasted until very recently, but it would be helpful to have dates for all the commissions shown here and some information as to which of Mrs Christie's stories Adams has not illustrated. Adams, and his publishers, do not mind keeping readers in the dark; as a matter of fact they have a slightly irritating tendency to play silly games of mystification with this book, with Mr Symons joining in. There are little jokes about a piece of driftwood, shown in the American cover for *Evil Under the Sun*, presented by the woman who became the illustrator's second wife; bits from one illustration are used, untitled, to fill in blank spaces; curious allusions are made to missing versions of various covers and to the disappearance of certain original paintings; there are vague references to the difficulty which Julian Symons had in seeing some of the paintings themselves, rather than as photographs or on film. To be fair, though, Adams may merely be trying to be discreet in referring to his relations with his publishers and to the opinion that the Christie family, generally interested and admiring, may have had of particular covers. Nor is it easy to produce a book that is sufficiently serious for readers interested primarily in the subtleties of these illustrations, but at the same time chatty enough for the vast throng of Christie readers.

But Adams, Symons, Pomfret and Co have pulled it off, with a mixture of professional exactitude and easy conversation. Nice Mr Adams, one concludes; such a sinister painter but such an unthreatening, ordinary fellow, with his touching blunders: "I also think that the title is one of the most evocative of all Agatha Christie's," he says of *Sad Cypress*; spelling it like the island; Ruthless; yet faintly ridiculous. Rather like Poirot and Miss Marple, in a way.

In June Thompson's *Shadow of a Doubt* (221pp. Constable. £6.95. 0 09 64350 4) her slow, quiet Essex policeman, Detective Chief Inspector Finch, looks into the disappearance of Clair Jordan, timid middle-aged wife of a successful psychiatrist with a private clinic in the country. Rather an old-fashioned trick lies at the base of the plot, but the novel's strength lies more in subtle depiction of character and of interplay between personalities than in complicated detective work.

Peter Abrahams, in *The Fury of Rachel Monette* (310pp. Muller. £7.50. 0 584 31151 6), tells how she, living quietly on a New England campus with her husband - a professor of French - and small son, returns home one day to find the husband murdered and the son kidnapped. The search for revenge and her solid takes her to North Africa, Israel and France; and through a lot of pages. Credibility is shaky, but the narrative moves too fast for it ever to collapse completely.

T. J. Blyden

commentary

Country house Cluedo

By Andrew Motion

A Cotswold Death
BBC TV

"Brideshead today would be open to trippers, its treasures rearranged by expert hands and the fabric better maintained than it was by Lord Marchmain." Towards the end of his life Evelyn Waugh was convinced that most English country houses could only survive by forfeiting their privacy. What would he have made of salvation by a foreign buyer? In Tony Bick's *A Cotswold Death*, country house conventions are writ as large as they were in *Brideshead Revisited* – but for comic rather than sweetly-bitter nostalgic effect. After all those weeks of Waugh's heartfelt but indulgent tristesse, the change is a relief.

The house in *A Cotswold Death* (actually Barnsley Park in Gloucestershire) has been saved from the "decay and spoliation" that Waugh feared by Sheikh Ali Ben Hassan. But as any Cluedo player could have told him, the traditions of English rural privilege provide the ideal conditions for another time-honoured custom: the country house murder. It is a matter of minutes before the play points this out to the Sheikh – in the library, with a paperknife. And because of his royal connections, the cries of "Whodunnit!" produce a detective of great eminence – none other than Inspector Anthony Arrowsmith, "Scotland Yard Superstar" and genuine scourge of the Cheltenham Ripper. But it rapidly becomes clear, this is more than a case of one celebrity trying to solve the death of another. It is a question of various unsuitable or outmoded traditions battling to survive. The beliefs and customs of the Arabs, though tolerated, are alien to the house; the exclusiveness and social structure of the house are out of step with the time; and Arrowsmith, "the last of the great detectives" is a self-confessed anachronism.

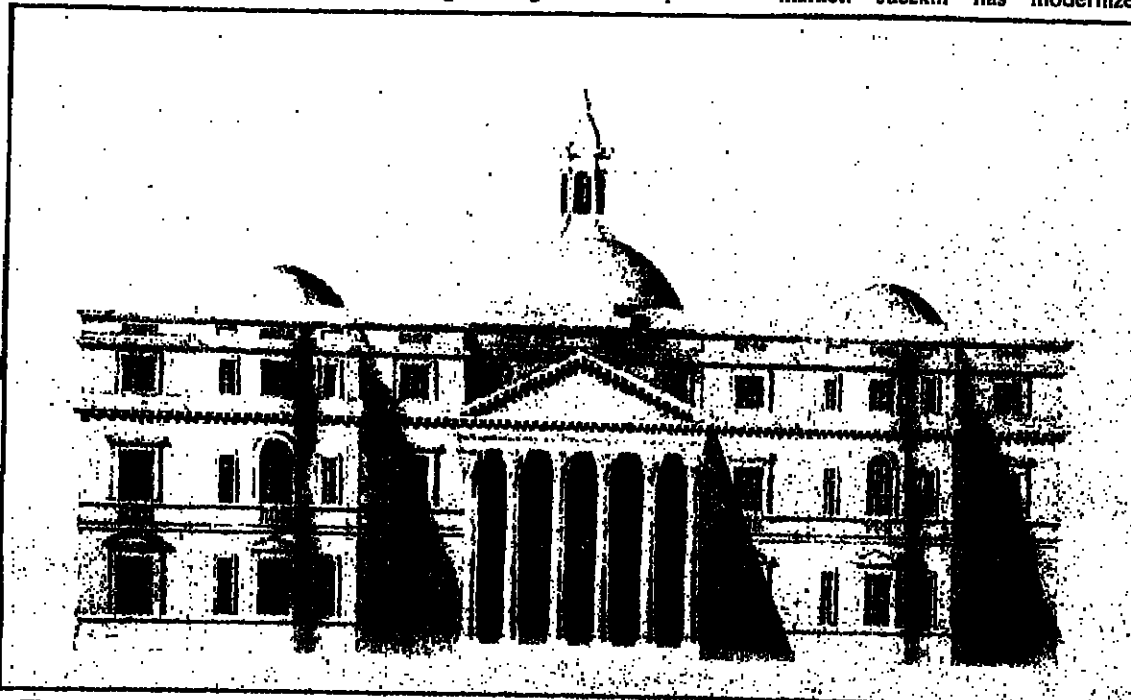
These misplaced and mistimed conventions provide Bick with most of his comedy, largely because he credits his characters with enormous self-consciousness. Arrowsmith – played with excellently fastidious sadness by Ian Richardson – is not only aware of himself as "A technical character in a grey age", but regularly quotes other detectives, notably Sherlock Holmes (The identification is more than a matter of words, too: in a wry pastiche of Holmes's drug-taking, Arrowsmith gives himself daily injections against diabetes). His assistant, Detective Sergeant Baxter – the chauffeur is called Watson – is also given to citation, and in the course of investigations it becomes obvious that most of the suspects are similarly well aware of their stereotypes: Kerim, the sports-car-driving, cocaine-sniffing, girlfriend-grabbing second son of the dead Sheikh; the good old housekeeper with an extraordinary past; and the inscrutable butler whose actual response to the sleuth's saying "Traditionally the butler did it" is "Traditionally the police are fools, and a gifted amateur solves the case."

Baxter, the gifted amateur, does just that – with the help of a plot by Conan Doyle – but not before a couple of other characters have been disposed of. These are both in their different ways, like people whom fate or corruption has type-cast, and who therefore find themselves vulnerable to genuine step-son and the Vicar whose congregation has shrunk almost to nothing and who amuses himself by playing at detective (a kind of Miss Marple and Father Brown rolled into one). But while their lives confirm the play's main theme, their deaths hardly ticken the plot. In fact, by the time the murderer finally exposes the culprit and explains his motives – hav-

ing denied Baxter his moment of glory – the plot has begun to look distinctly thin. For the record, Ahmed, the Sheikh's elder son, has killed his father for fear of being prevented from living the life of a squire in England. The Sheikh, when she discovers this, kills herself and Ahmed by deliberately crashing her helicopter. This leaves Kerim free to revert to another type, renounce his car and girlfriend, and assume the responsibilities of a Sheikh.

Although this denouement is in keeping with the rest of the play, it brings to a crisis something which has been apparent throughout. As Bick's discussion of tradition develops, it becomes repetitive, and

inhibits the play's ironical imaginative freedom. The comedy never quite absorbs, or escapes, the "serious" social and historical considerations. When Bick gives his main preoccupation the slip, as in Arrowsmith's parodic but recognizably anxious and guilt-laden dream sequence, he is marvellously inventive. When he is more strictly confined to his subject, he is only rarely more than mildly amusing. Whatever its disadvantages, this at least allows attention to wander elsewhere, and concentrate on the play's two outstanding ingredients: the house, with its beautiful warm Cotswold stone exterior and ravishing hall; and Nick Bick's music, which is exactly right – energetic, elegant and camp.



Thomas Wright's design for the south front of Horton House, Northamptonshire is one of 171 illustrations, including 12 colour plates, from *The Palladians* by John Harris (132pp. Trefoll Books. £11.95. 0 86294 001 X).

Argument for the prosecution

By Harold Hobson

John Mortimer's Casebook
Young Vic Theatre

After the marathon of *Brideshead Revisited*, John Mortimer's latest play, *Indiscreet*, is only a swift sprint, rather frightening. As it is played at the Young Vic in John Mortimer's Casebook – in company with *Dock Brief* and *The Prince of Darkness* – it throws new light on both these plays, one of which – *Dock Brief* – is generally reckoned, along with Rattigan's *The Browning Version*, to be equal first in the ranks of English one-act plays written during the last half-century. The two halves of John Mortimer's professional career complement each other. Mortimer, O.C., usually appears at the Old Bailey as counsel for the defence; but Mortimer, dramatist, has in him a strong strain of counsel for the prosecution, and at the beginning of *John Mortimer's Casebook* he says specifically that the evening's three plays amount to an attack on the country's three most revered learned professions – the Law, the Church, and medicine.

The result is fascinating and surprising. In its new context the most famous of the three plays, *Dock Brief*, turns out to be the least convincing part of its author's indictment, though it remains the most theatrically gripping. The story of the simple-minded, kindly murderer (John Alderton) whose defence is bungled (happily, as it transpires) by an incompetent and self-centered lawyer (Mortimer) is technically brilliant, very witty, and at the end, when the murderer is acquitted, more concerned about the lawyer's distress over the failure of his speech to the jury than he is with his own

situation, extremely touching. But it is not suggested that the lawyer (Nigel Hawthorne) is typical of his profession – at least, not in his incompetence – and one can hardly condemn the whole legal system just because one counsel is inefficient and selfish. Furthermore, the play ends with a thumping great commitment to the good sense and humanity of the Home Office, so that we are left with the feeling that if something is wrong with the law all is well with the Civil Service, which I suspect is not the meaning that Mortimer intended his play to convey. But as a play, and not as an argument for the prosecution, it is magnificent.

The Prince of Darkness, though less satisfactory than *Dock Brief*, gains considerably through its juxtaposition with the other two plays. In the theatre we are more interested in philosophy today than we were when *The Prince of Darkness* was first presented a few years ago. Berkeley's theory about the impossibility of proving the existence of matter, for example, plays a considerable part in Simon Gray's *Quatermain's Terms* at the Queen's Theatre. And in *The Prince of Darkness*, in the household of a "with-it" priest, and his timid wife, we are brought up against the question of miracles. Do they, or do they not, contravene the order of Nature? Balfour's argument in *A Defence of Philosophical Doubt* that the order of Nature cannot be proved to exist still remains difficult to refute; and so does Eddington's claim that, if an order of Nature does exist, it is not what nearly a hundred per cent of men and women think it is. On both showings what is termed miraculous is a permanent, though admittedly not an often-encountered, possibility – a proposition that is doubted. Mortimer suggests, nowhere more earnestly than in the Church. For when the miracle of the

For the sake of Art

By Helen McNeill

Lady Chatterley's Lover
Various cinemas

This piece of codswallop is truly the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* for our times. Its director, Just Jaeckin, and his creature Sylvia Kristel already occupy a certain niche in our culture for their *Emmanuelle* films, which made "tasteful" soft porn into a mass entertainment form of the 1970s. Now they are attempting another genre breakthrough by adapting D. H. Lawrence's novel for what might best be called the mass art film market. Jaeckin has modernized

Lawrence's rather dated epic of phallus-worship into a narcissistic and masturbatory cinema lyric which seems gruesomely appropriate to contemporary taste. The result is, however, nothing more or less than another soft-porn film, albeit with filler by Lawrence.

Where both talent and conviction are absent, packaging is all. Jaeckin's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is all about the wrapping and unwrapping of a commercial package. As the film opens, sombre mood music, soft focus, and an arty zoom towards the darkened Chatterley mansion signal the onset of what appears to be a sluggish multi-part television version of some beloved classic of historical fiction. With a tediousness that appears to arise from loyalty to an old-fashioned text, Jaeckin shows that Britain and Germany are about to go to war by having a Prussian and an Englishman quibble between waltzes *chez* Chatterley. Lawrence wrote no such scene, but by boring us with potted history, Jaeckin and co-author Christopher Wicking presumably hope they have gained the right to omit Constance Chatterley's first affair with Michaelis and to gloss over the irritable and impulsive resistances which mark her relations with all her men. The film's other generic packaging becomes most apparent once Constance and gamekeeper Mellors have got going. Thereafter, sequences of running and dancing in slow motion, pastel colour tones, glistening bodies and a slowly downward-panning camera transport the viewer to a land of make-believe the likes of which most of us have experienced only in abbreviated form while watching chocolate commercials.

Lady Chatterley's Lover was meant to be the film in which Sylvia Kristel finally put on her clothes for the sake of Art, and in fact Shirley Russell's meticulous costumes do provide the most consistent source of visual pleasure. Miss Kristel enunciates complete and correctly-pronounced English sentences with the aid of dubbing; post-synching makes everyone else seem to talk too loudly and in a vacuum. But clothed or naked, Kristel can't act. Since the film is her vehicle, most of the supporting cast under-act, either to help her out or to add to the general tastelessness. Ann Mitchell's muted Mrs Bolton suggests a discreet and infinitely wise Athena of rather greater depth than Lawrence's servile original; as Mellors, Nicholas Clay spouts Yorkshire dialect throughout, although Lawrence's Mellors turned his taciturnity on and off arbitrarily, the better to angle on the strength of his enormous buttocks which are prominently displayed in several scenes of the film, sometimes in proximity to Miss Kristel's curiously antiseptic body.

As a record of how certain segments of contemporary Western society imagine themselves making love, Jaeckin's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* deserves a time capsule of its own. Without films like this, the future might not know that we like to think that the female, upon being embraced by the male, arches her head back (to avoid further kisses?) and makes little ballike noises. Jaeckin's film is a travesty of Lawrence's novel, but its tasteful-vulgar fantasies are probably no further removed from reality than Lawrence's mythologies were. Lawrence's descriptions like "the small buttocks beautiful in an exquisite delicate manliness" and "the silky slope of her loins" no longer influence any serious fiction in English; they have become the stuff of soft porn.

The Oxford Playhouse Company's production of *Machbeth* will play in Oxford until February 6. Thereafter it can be seen at the Wyvern Theatre, Swindon (February 6-11); Theatre Devonshire Park Theatre, Eastbourne (February 15-20); and the Playhouse, Weston-Super-Mare (February 22-27).

commentary

The melancholy round

By Gabriele Annan

La Ronde
Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester
Aldwych Theatre, London

Schnitzler's *Reigen* – called *La Ronde* in England by universal consent. It is Freud who endorses society's sanctimonious assumption that sex has guilt built into it – though of course for other reasons. Another bourgeois fantasy satirized in the play is the idea of man as a heroic tailor whose efforts and hardships should make a woman feel humble. "The young gentleman works so hard", the Housemaid says to him as

In the original performance, the curtain was lowered on the dots and quickly raised again for the post-coital reprise. In Manchester the theatre is in the round; Caspar Wrede gets his actors briefly off the stage when the text allows, or – much less successfully – out of sight under a table, a tent, or a bench; or he simply blacks out. In London John Barton's couples couple, in full view of the audience, but with the minimum of exposure.

Both in Manchester and London the programme notes make much of Freud's admiration for Schnitzler, in whose work he found "the very same presuppositions, interests and conclusions" as were his own. Schnitzler – a doctor, like Freud, and with a particular interest in psychological disorders – wrote a great many plays, stories and novels. There is no knowing which of them Freud particularly had in mind. I do not think it can have been *La Ronde*. True, it is about sex (though Freud had other interests – and some of them, like Jewishness, he certainly shared with Schnitzler); but so are works by Racine and Feydeau about sex. In fact, one could almost call *La Ronde* anti-Freudian. None of the characters have any sexual hang-ups, except for the Young Gentleman who can't make it the first time with the Young Wife but quickly gets over this with her help.

More important, not one of them feels any guilt whatsoever. Yet there is plenty of scope for guilt of some sort, for in each pair of lovers one exploits the other. It is usually the women who are the victims and take it for granted that this must be so. Schnitzler – unlike Freud – is always on the women's side, even when the woman is dominant, like the Young Wife or The Actress who eats men for breakfast. (The Count is so *comme il faut* that he is reluctant to be eaten until after dinner).

Freud also noted Schnitzler's "dissection of the cultural and conventional certainties of our society". Here one is on firmer ground. Schnitzler goes straight for the worship of sexual purity and the hypocrisy to which it leads. The Housemaid, the Sweet Girl (a sort of Viennese midwife) and the Young Wife all have to pretend to be innocent, then they are. The "lendering Husband", then, is in love with an ideal of virginity and purity and believes it to be incarnated in his young wife. He tells her that promiscuous ladies have "a certain nostalgia for virtue". The line is important because it defines a society in

which hypocrisy has toppled over into mawkishness. Schnitzler gets a lot of comedy out of sending up the mawkishness; particularly the lachrymatory notion that promiscuity makes women deeply unhappy, and that men are really revolted by sleeping with them and by their own promiscuity. It is Freud who endorses society's sanctimonious assumption that sex has guilt built into it – though of course for other reasons. Another bourgeois fantasy satirized in the play is the idea of man as a heroic tailor whose efforts and hardships should make a woman feel humble. "The young gentleman works so hard", the Housemaid says to him as

Both give the meaning and seem easy on the tongue. But by losing the Viennese Vernacular, both lose not only the characters' instant social definition, but also their charm: and they need charm because this is an erotic piece and it would be beastly if they had none. Another, different problem is the monotony of the structure which is very noticeable in *Reigen*. The production needs not only to put back the charm: it needs a lot of variety, poetry, mood and atmosphere. Barton's does all this.

Caspar Wrede's Manchester production is set in a modern age which stretches from the Prostitutes' max-

married five years and have one child. Supposing they conformed more or less to the nineteenth-century Central European prescription whereby a bridegroom should be twice the age of his bride minus seven, at the time of the play, Emma (who married straight from the nursery) would be between 23 and 27 (about the same age as her seducer), and Karl between 34 and 42. But Tony Church is a little too much of a paterfamilias in his smoking cap; one would give the two of them at least fifteen years of marriage and five children. Susan Fleetwood is altogether too comfortable-looking; her sister would never have given a ball – which is where Emma met the Young Gentleman.

The ultimate in bravura performances at the Aldwych come from Richard Pascoe and Barbara Leigh-Hunt as the Poet and the Actress, she a cross between Irene Worth and Tallulah Bankhead, he a superb parody of Gielgud. Corrina Seddon is particularly good as the Prostituted. She opens the play on a hoarse sexy whisper (in contrast to the piercing shriek of the Manchester tart), and in spite of her constant protestations that she is always lucky, she seems sad and defeated.

This is as it should be. Schnitzler said about his play: "I felt the melancholy of it much more strongly than the funny side." The melancholy is generally supposed to be post-coital; in fact, after sex most of the characters are not so much sad as afraid of being caught, either by their recent partner or by society. But the sadness is elsewhere, and every sort and kind. There is the sadness of longing for an ideal love, either lost for ever or never encountered – a comic parody of Plato's divided soul searching for its other half. The Sweet Girl has never got over her first Karl, nor the Actress over her Fritz – even though both were rotters. The Count kisses the Prostituted's eyes because they remind him of someone else. The cuckolded Husband is in love with his wife in the house. Apart from the Poet and the Actress, cocooned from communication with others by their, colossal egotisms, all the rest are seeking to "connect", but in vain: the Count, rigid and almost speechless with conventionalism, is absurdly looking for someone "to talk to"; the wife feels insufficiently loved by her husband; the Sweet Girl has learnt to accept the fact that most men who take her out are married.

Emblem on Marriage", a woodcut from Barthelmy Aneau's *Picta Poesis* (published in Lyon in 1552) in the British Library collection, is reproduced from *The Androgyne* by Elinore Zola (90pp. Thames and Hudson. £3.95. 0 500 810281).

he lies on the sofa reading a novel; and the husband explains to his wife that he can't sleep with her too often because she has to go out into the hostile world. One must fight and one must strive. But although *La Ronde* is full of wit and irony, Schnitzler's characters are not witty at all. The dialogue is naturalistic, and the characters are defined in some cases by their inarticulacy, as much as by their language. They speak colloquially, ungrammatically and in a variety of Viennese accents, from the prostitute at one end of the social scale to the Count at the other, and as it happens the Count's argot, is the more noticeable. That is just one of the problems the translation has to cope with: in English, dialect and accent are directly related to class. In German-speaking countries this is not necessarily so. The nearest equivalent to the way the Count talks would be a kind of Bertie Wooster jargon.

Neither Charles Osborne in his translation (211pp. Carcanet. 26.95. 085653 3981) for the Manchester Royal Exchange for John Barton and Sue Davies in theirs (90pp. Penguin. £1.50. 0 14 048 1710) for the RSC have attempted to render any idiosyncrasies of speech. They were still left with plenty of problems. The Husband, for instance, keeps trying to make the Sweet Girl call him "Du" (which instead of "thee" is "you"). Barton and Davies have dealt with this very well by making her interpolate "Sir". Osborne has simply cut the lines. There is little to choose between the two transla-

tion. Both give the meaning and seem easy on the tongue. But by losing the Viennese Vernacular, both lose not only the characters' instant social definition, but also their charm: and they need charm because this is an erotic piece and it would be beastly if they had none. Another, different problem is the monotony of the structure which is very noticeable in *Reigen*. The production needs not only to put back the charm: it needs a lot of variety, poetry, mood and atmosphere. Barton's does all this.

Caspar Wrede's Manchester production is set in a modern age which stretches from the Prostitutes' max- married five years and have one child. Supposing they conformed more or less to the nineteenth-century Central European prescription whereby a bridegroom should be twice the age of his bride minus seven, at the time of the play, Emma (who married straight from the nursery) would be between 23 and 27 (about the same age as her seducer), and Karl between 34 and 42. But Tony Church is a little too much of a paterfamilias in his smoking cap; one would give the two of them at least fifteen years of marriage and five children. Susan Fleetwood is altogether too comfortable-looking; her sister would never have given a ball – which is where Emma met the Young Gentleman.

New Oxford books:
Classical StudiesHieronymus
of Cardia

Jane Hornblower

This is the first full-length study of the major political and military historian of the early Hellenistic period, when the Successors of Alexander the Great fought for, and partitioned, his empire. £18.50 Oxford Classical and Philosophical Monographs 28 January

Textbook of Syrian
Semitic
Inscriptions,
Volume III

Phoenician Inscriptions,
including inscriptions in
the mixed dialect of
Arslan Tash

John C. L. Gibson

Phoenician literature has perished, and only epigraphic sources remain to supply first-hand evidence of what must have been one of the great civilizations of antiquity. This volume presents a selection of these inscriptions. It pays special attention to the origin and development of the Phoenician script, and to the relation of Phoenician to Hebrew. £15 28 January

Euripides: Heracles

Godfrey W. Bond

The last major edition of Euripides' *Heracles* appeared in 1895. In his introduction and commentary to this new edition, Mr Bond has sought to help the modern reader to approach the poetry and dramatic art of Euripides by studying the formal elements which are so prominent in his plays and his highly rhetorical style. The controversial topics of the unity and meaning of *Heracles* is thoroughly discussed. £26

Euripides: Fabulae

Volume II
Edited by James Diggle

This is the first of three volumes which will eventually replace Gilbert Murray's *Oxford Text of Euripides*. Dr Diggle has examined the most important manuscripts himself. His text differs in numerous places from Murray's, and his apparatus criticus gives a fuller report of conjectures, including many by modern scholars. £8.25 Oxford Classical Texts 28 January

Julian
and Hellenism

An Intellectual Biography

Polymnia
Athanasias-Fowden

This book tells the story of the transformation of a reclusive and scholarly adolescent into a successful (general and an audacious social reformer. The author traces the sequence of the Emperor Julian's responses to inward and outward challenges, and dwells on the tensions and conflicts that each new choice created for him. £17.50

Oxford
University Press

commentary

Advertising Kunst

By John Willett

The Art of the Poster in Austria and Germany 1900-1920
Fischer Fine Art,
30 King St. St James's, London SW1.

This exhibition may not be very profound, but it entertainingly illuminates the ways in which taste gets made. Anyone expecting to catch some reflection of the great radical movements of those two decades will be disappointed: Schiele, Kokoschka, the Brücke, the Blaue Reiter and so on might as well not exist for all one sees of them here; not even their backwash is visible - Pechstein's or Ullrich's political posters for instance of 1918-1919 are not shown. What the visitor can see however is the way in which the impact which those radicals made on critics some twenty-five or thirty years ago has led to a revaluation (not least in crude monetary terms, with prices ranging up to £1,500 and more) of the more conventional commercial art which continued alongside them. The show bridges a gap in the superficial fashions of the same period as the public subsequently came to accept them, linking Art Nouveau to Art Deco via the Viennese designers and the notably heavier-handed Munich school.

Not many well-known artists are involved. Von Stuck from Munich, Moser and Roller from Vienna are represented; there is also a powerful design from Zagreb apparently by Mestrovic (whom the catalogue calls Maestrovich), and a sub-Nazi horseman for the 1914 Werkbund exhibition by Peter Behrens, which makes skilful use of a gilt ground. The catalogue tells us nothing about the remainder apart from their dates, nor does it comment on the occasions and apparent purposes of the

various posters. Yet this is among the most intriguing aspects of the subject, which kept up a certain nostalgia even after the Habsburg and Hohenzollern empires had fallen. The Austrians advertise War Loan with nasty-tempered eagles and Statues of Libertyesque ladies, or they deploy their cultivated conventional elegance to entice the postwar public to Viennese balls. There are some good posters for the Secession exhibitions, notably a strongly abstract design of 1912 by Richard Hartinger and a lithograph by the rather older Friedrich König. The dates of the show are a little misleading (items actually range from 1897 to 1929) and the two most comic exhibits show a pigtailed blonde in an apple tree to advertise what the catalogue terms "Anniversary of Kaiser and Federal Austrian shooting" in 1898, and an Icarus figure carrying passengers in celebration of the opening of the Schneeberg funicular around the same time; this unfortunate piece of misplaced mythology is by Alfred Roller.

The Munich posters, many of them advertising art exhibitions (including one at the Glaspalast in 1926, only five years before it burned down), tend to be forbiddingly classical in the manner taken over and developed further by Hitler's Haus der Deutschen Kunst. Or else they seem over-genial, like the self-recommendations of "Die 6", a group of designers whose best-known member was Emil Preterorius. More could have been said about the many excellent printers. The most useful thing about the catalogue (whose transcription of titles and names tends to be slapdash) is its unfolding to become itself a poster which gives reproductions of all the listed exhibits; this makes a good and cheerful conspectus, though its colour is very approximate.

Bear-baiting

By Elizabeth Winter

Andrzej Krauze
The Polish Social and Cultural Centre, 240 King Street, London W6.

This exhibition of drawings and cartoons by the young Polish artist, Andrzej Krauze provides an exceptional opportunity for looking behind the headlines of recent events in Poland. It coincides with the publication of a selection of more than eighty of his cartoons, entitled *Andrzej Krauze's Poland*, with a preface by George Mikes and captions in Polish, Russian and English (95pp. Nina Karsov, London, £4.50, 0 907652 01 8.). Both the exhibition, which is on until January 24, and the book were, of course, prepared before the imposition of martial law in December.

Krauze's cartoons have appeared in major English, French and German papers. Before leaving Poland in 1979, he was a regular contributor to the weekly Warsaw journal *Kultura*, and during 1980 his work appeared in the trade union paper *Solidarnosc*. He is also an outstanding poster designer and illustrator of children's books; he illustrated the Polish translation of *Animal Farm* brought out by the independent publishing house NOWA. A small selection of his non-political drawings are also on show - surreal, grotesque and private visions of animal shapes merging into human form, or of inanimate objects taking on weird dimensions under some nameless pressure.

His cartoons deal with such aspects of the Polish situation as bureaucratic corruption; the pusillanimity of the party; economic chaos;

censorship in all its subtle and devious manifestations; and, never very far away, the "geographic situation" in the shape of the bemuddled figure of Brezhnev. The tense and anxious relationship between the Party and Solidarity is a crucial theme.

The cover of the book shows the giant figure of Solidarity, breaking through the ceiling, from the ropes which hold him to the ground, watched in silence by the tiny, bewildered figures of Party men. In earlier drawings, dating from 1976-80, the recurrent figure of the Party man appears as a speech-making apparition, with all the paraphernalia of office - briefcase, notes, microphone - a table-thumping, slogan-shouting, six-handed "spideman". In another drawing he is proudly showing his son the podium, microphones, potted plant, portrait and flag in the empty meeting room, saying, "One day, my son, all this will be yours".

The Party man's complacency receives a rude shock in summer 1980. With the caption, "A sea wind" from the Baltic port of Gdansk rises the puffing figure of Solidarity, scattering the trappings of bureaucracy. In the period of "renewal" the apparition is seen standing, still once, in a wigwag being pulled over rough and stormy ground by the stolid, slightly naive figure of Brezhnev, the Party man appealing to the lumbering figure of Brezhnev, the Party man, Solidarity - won't play with him.

The immediacy of impact in Krauze's work is frequently emphasized by the captions, scrawled, graffiti-like, above the drawings. This is a richly rewarding exhibition.

Fin-de-siècle in Finland

By J. M. Richards

Lars Sonck 1870-1956
RIBA Heinz Gallery,
21 Portman Square, London W1.

The Museum of Finnish Architecture in Helsinki, one of the best-run organizations of its kind, specializes in modest but scholarly exhibitions, mostly based on research by its own staff. Some, regrettably, are not seen elsewhere except in the form of the illustrated catalogues produced with them (the fascinating 1979 exhibition, compiled by Asko Salokorpi, on the eighteenth-century Finnish ironworking communities was a case in point), but some are afterwards sent on tour. The Heinz Gallery's exhibition (open until February 27) on the architect Lars Sonck is one of these. It is accompanied by an excellent monograph on Sonck (*Lars Sonck 1870-1956*, by Pekka Korvenmaa, Paula Kivinen and Asko Salokorpi, 78pp. Museum of Finnish Architecture, £6.) with text in English as well as Finnish.

His arrival here is welcome because, although the gallery's information handout exaggerates when it describes Sonck as hardly known outside Finland, only certain prominent buildings by him in Tampere and Helsinki are familiar and the part he played in that remarkable *fin-de-siècle* episode, the Finnish National Romantic movement, has never been made plain although Sonck, along with Eliel Saarinen, was its main instigator among the architects (as Jean Sibelius was among the musicians and Akseli Gallen-Kallela among the painters). The exhibition gives full attention to Sonck's early work which helped to set the movement going.

It was as much a political as a cultural movement in that it was inspired by the desire, in Finland in

the 1890s, to cultivate a sense of national identity following the repressions of the Russian regime under the Tsar Nicholas II, which had increasingly denied Finland the large degree of autonomy the country had theoretically possessed since its seizure from Sweden in 1809. The leaders of the movement looked especially to Karelia, Finland's eastern province, for reminders of their own cultural history, and the architectural outcome was first seen in some small houses in the Åland Islands built by Sonck in 1894-95 with walls of logs and widely projecting eaves, modelled on the traditional Karelian farmhouse. They included a house for his own use on the remote island of Finström where he had spent his childhood and which he continued to inhabit for the rest of his life. These houses were followed by a villa at Kuopio (1902) in similar style and the Villa Aino which he built for Sibelius in 1904 in an artists' colony at Järvenpää on the shores of Lake Tuusula, where the composer lived.

The National Romantic movement, of which these houses, and Gesellius, Lindgren and Saarinen's group of houses and studios at Hvitträsk (1901), were the beginning, grew into something bigger than a nostalgic look back into the past; for they and the later work of the same architects reflected also the ferment that was taking place at that time in Europe: Art Nouveau, in Brussels, the Secession in Vienna and the Arts and Crafts movement in England (there are echoes of Voysey and Baillie Scott in Sonck's and his colleagues' houses). For a while this revolutionary style - or amalgam of styles - dominated Finnish architecture.

Sonck was responsible for some of its major monuments such as the cathedral at Tampere (1902) and the extraordinary Telephone Building at Helsinki (1905), both having the rock-faced stonework that historians have attributed to the influence of

the American H. H. Richardson but may just as likely be based on medieval precedents in Finland itself. Perhaps Sonck's best building was the Eira Hospital, Helsinki (1905), which is useful to have the whole range of his work on record including his personal version of late Gothic Revival, but the exhibition underlines the fact that, compared with his own rather stiff and formal. The moment of change can be identified as the signed Kallio church in Helsinki and photographs of the church as completed in 1912. Only Sonck's wood domestic architecture remained consistent throughout his career.

The monograph includes a very interesting article on his career and a very positive personality by Paul Kivinen which does not, however, say much about the surprising elements of sociability and solitariness that were typical of his later life, although an analysis of these could perhaps throw light on the change that took place in his work. He lived to be eighty-six and many stories current in Finland about his domineering independent habits. One such story, illustrating his unworldly music-making temperament, was told to me many years ago by the late Aalto when we were driving together across southern Finland to look at his newly completed library at Viipuri. We passed close to Lake Tuusula, which reminded Aalto of Sonck and the other National Romantic architects whose influence on his own work he acknowledged. Sonck never married but maintained a succession of mistresses. In order to ensure that each mistress, when they parted, had the means of earning a living, he presented her with a expensive sewing-machine. This became known and accepted. A sewing-machine would be delivered to his house; the current mistress knew it was time to go. No announcement or explanation was needed.

Among this week's contributors

ZYGOMUNT G. BARANSKI is a lecturer in Italian at the University of Reading.

HAROLD BRAVER was recently elected to the new chair of American Literature at the University of Amsterdam.

ANTHONY BURGESS's most recent novel is *Earthly Powers*, 1981. His opera *The Blooms of Dublin* is to be broadcast on February 1.

WILLIAM COLEMAN is Professor of History of Science and History of Medicine at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

PATRICK COLLINSON is Professor of History at the University of Kent. His most recent book is *Archbishop Grindal 1519-1583: the Struggle for a Reformed Church*, 1979.

CLARE CROSS's most recent book is *Church and People 1450-1660*, 1976.

C. S. L. DAVIES is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford. He is the author of *Peace, Print and Protestantism 1450-1558*, 1977.

MISRA DONAT is a Radio 3 music producer.

FILIPPO DOMINI was formerly Director of the Italian Institute in London.

TIM DOOLEY is the editor of the poetry magazine, *Green Lines*.

G. R. ELTON's books include *England Under the Tudors*, 1955, and *Reform and Reformation*, 1977.

STEPHEN FENDER is plotting the Gold Coast West will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

KYRIL FITZLYON's most recent book is *Before the Revolution*, 1978.

ALBERT HOURANI's most recent book is *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, 1981.

GABRIEL JOSPOVICI's most recent novel is *The Air We Breathe*, was published last year.

MICHAEL KENNEDY's books include *The Autobiography of Charles Halle*, 1972.

ZACHARY LEADER's *Reading Blake's Songs* was published last year.

JOHN MCCARTHY is the Governor of HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs.

PATRICK MCCARTHY is the author of *Celine*, 1975. His biography of Albert Camus will be published next month.

HELEN MCNEIL is a lecturer in English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia.

ADAM MARS-JONES's book of stories *Lantern Lecture* was published in 1981.

HOWARD MILLER was formerly Master of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. He is co-author of *Medieval England: Rural Society and Economic Change 1086-1348*, 1978.

JANEY MORGAN is writing the official biography of Agatha Christie.

KENNETH O. MORGAN's books include *Wales 1880-1980*, 1981.

ANDREW MOTION's long poem *Impendence* was published in December.

IDRIS PARRY's collection of essays *Hand to Mouth* is reviewed on p. 68.

VALERIE PEARL is the President of New Hall, Cambridge.

SIR JAMES RICHARDS was editor of *The Architectural Review* from 1971 to 1971.

JOHN RUSSELL BROWN is Professor of English at the University of Sussex and Associate Director of The National Theatre.

KERRY SCHOTT is a lecturer in Economics at University College London.

GEORGE STEINER's books include *Afterthoughts* and *On Difficulty and Other Essays*, both 1978. His novel *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.* was published last year.

JONATHAN SUMPTON's books include *Pilgrimage*, 1975, and *The Arabian Crusade*, 1978.

PHILIP THODY's books include *Rubens Barthes: A Conservative Estimate*, 1977.

JOHN WARRACK's books include *Carl Maria von Weber*, 1968, and *Tchaikovsky*, 1975.

HUGO WILLIAM'S *No Particular Place to Go* was first published last year.

JOHN WILLET's books include *Exprestism*, 1971, and *The New Society*, 1977.

'Political Pilgrims'

Sir, - A standard device by which the conformist intellectuals of East or West deal with irritating dissent opinion is to try to overwhelm it with a flood of lies. Paul Johnson illustrates the technique with his reference to my "prodigies of apologetics" for the Khmer Rouge" (December 25). I have stated the facts before in this journal, and will do so again, not under any illusion that they will be relevant to the guardians of the faith.

My "prodigies of apologetics" during the Pol Pot years consisted of a single review-article (*Nation*, June 25, 1977), in which E. S. Herman and I discussed media manipulation of evidence concerning Indochina. With regard to Cambodia, we reviewed estimates of killings from "possibly thousands" (*Far Eastern Economic Review* - when the Pol Pot regime fell, the *Review* estimated the population at 8.2 million, well above the 1975 level) to millions, noting that "it is a fair generalization that the larger the number of deaths attributed to the Khmer Rouge, and the more the US role is set aside, the larger the audience that will be reached". We concluded accurately that "we do not know where the truth lies amidst these sharply conflicting assessments". We praised François Ponchaud's *Cambodge année zéro* as "serious and worth reading", noting his "grizzly account of what refugees have reported to him about the barbarity of their treatment at the hands of the Khmer Rouge" and their "brutal practice".

Apart from this article, my "prodigies" consisted of letters to several journalists urging that in referring to Ponchaud, they pay attention to what he wrote rather than relying on falsified commentary on his book. Ponchaud's own reaction to the totality of my writings on Cambodia during the Pol Pot period is given in the preface to the American edition of his book, where he cites our commendable attitude and precision of thought" shown in my writings on Cambodia. Note that I am referring to the American edition, not the simultaneous British edition, where these passages are eliminated and replaced by some remarkable lies, which have since been widely repeated; the two prefaces are dated the same day and the British edition is unavailable in the United States, where the lies would have been immediately exposed.

Subsequently, Herman and I devoted a chapter to Cambodia in volume II of our *Political Economy of Human Rights* (1979). We began by pointing out that "there is no difficulty in documenting major atrocities and repression, primarily from the reports of refugees and the 'record of atrocities in Cambodia' is substantial and often gruesome", continuing in this vein and noting finally that "when the facts are in, it may turn out that the more extreme condemnations were in fact correct", though, as a matter of simple logic, this would "in no way alter the conclusions we have reached on the central question addressed here: how the available facts were selected, modified, or sometimes invented to create a certain image offered to the general population".

The reason for the campaign of lies is that we documented a vast amount of fabrication of evidence, and contrasted widely publicised allegations with the quite different analysis of United States government specialists - who could hardly have been accused of being pro-Pol Pot in the period under review (largely 1975-77, since data about the later period was sparse at the time we wrote) and whose analyses in retrospect appear to have been fairly accurate. The context was extensive documentation of how the mainstream intelligentsia suppressed or justified the crimes of their own states during the same period. This naturally outraged those who feel that they should be free to lie willfully concerning the crimes of an official enemy while concealing or justifying

those of their own states - a phenomenon that is, incidentally, far more significant and widespread than the delusions about so-called "socialist" states that Johnson discusses, and correspondingly quite generally evaded. Hence the resort to the familiar technique that Johnson, among others, adopts.

NOAM CHOMSKY,
Department of Linguistics and Philosophy,
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge,
Massachusetts 02139.

'Hollywood's Vietnam'

Sir, - Poor Mr Adair (Letters, December 18). What can be done to console him? Not only does he get an unfavourable review from me (December 4), but now *Variety*, the trade publication of the US entertainment industry, has given him a two-column headline: "American Gilbert Adair's 'Vietnam' Book Laden with Error". The work, *Variety* writes, is "a poorly researched, frankly anti-American tract" in which "factual errors abound"; much of its comment is "irrelevant"; and "even the most patient reader is likely to toss the book aside in exasperation". All of which will no doubt convince Mr Adair that America is an evil place indeed, bombing Hanoi, clobbering his book. There seems to be no end of it.

Try as I may, I find almost nothing coherent enough to debate in either Mr Adair's letter or that of his supporter Mr Callaghan. I have the suspicion that both are profoundly non-political people, who, a decade or so ago perhaps, had a revelation of the Antichrist - *Amerika!* Since they have no predisposition to the empirical examination of new evidence, and since such a holistic revelation doesn't come along that often, after all, they are likely to cling to it for life.

Mr Callaghan's warning that "Vietnam is still too close for even the most detached historians to contemplate" is, with any objective certainty, is entertaining. That's right, Mr Callaghan. I made it all up: boat people, Pol Pot's liquidations, the Vietnam Gulag, Vietnam's invasions of Cambodia and Laos. His refusal to contemplate anything derogatory about Hanoi (he is certainly as wide open to anything favourable) is reminiscent of the extreme reluctance of certain people to entertain the notion that Joseph Stalin, for example, might be a bad person - until of course he was denounced by Khrushchev. Mr Callaghan will be horrified to hear that "revisionism" on Vietnam is proceeding in America at a most appalling rate, some of the most celebrated defenders of Hanoi having simply recanted.

Mr Adair's characterization of me as "extreme right-wing" is piquant, as if I were Charles Maurras or Alfred Rosenberg (does Mr Adair know these names?). In fact, I am about as right-wing as George Orwell. If I plead guilty to anything, it is to a deep conviction that Western society has values worth defending - a conviction I am not certain Mr Adair or Mr Callaghan share. I suspect, whatever their reasons may be, that they are estranged, not only from America, but from Western society as a whole. The reason for their particular animus against the United States is not difficult to locate: it is the leading military power of the West.

Well, we Americans have been an emotional, headstrong people, Mr Adair, sending our armies hither and yonder around the globe - to Britain (in 1942), to France, to Berlin, to Korea, to Vietnam - always with the fanatical, perhaps quite mistaken notion that we were helping. In the words of John Kennedy, "I assure the survival and the success of liberty".

We might not do it forever. If Mr Adair lives long enough he may see a world free of the influence of these crazed Americans. I leave him free to speculate as to whose influence

will replace theirs. A glance eastward to Poland might give him an inkling, but we should not be too hasty. Perhaps the era of universal peace and brotherhood will arrive. Perhaps the lion will lie down with the lamb.

RICHARD GRENIER,
Apt. 19A, 201 East 71st Street,
New York, NY 10021.

B. Traven

Sir, - Savkar Altineli (December 18) perpetrates at the same time an unnecessary complication and an unjustified simplification of the mystery of the writer B. Traven in the review of his novel *The Carreta* - which was incidentally first published in this country as long ago as 1936.

It is misleading to say that Will Wyatt and his BBC researchers have been "able to identify him as one Otto Wiencek, who had an earlier career as an actor and anarchist in Germany under the name of 'Ret Marut' before leaving Europe for good in the 1920s to start a new life as a novelist on the other side of the Atlantic". The surname of the real person whom Wyatt has identified with both Marut and Traven is actually Feige, since his father Adolf Feige married his mother Hormina Wiencek a few months after his birth. He was always called Otto Feige, and used his mother's maiden name only after as one of his many pseudonyms.

On the other hand, it should be said that, despite the brilliant investigations of Wyatt and his colleagues (and their predecessors), there is still no conclusive proof of the multiple identification, and there are still awkward gaps between the disappearance of Feige in 1904 and the appearance of Marut in 1907 and between the disappearance of Marut in 1924 and the appearance of Traven in Mexico in 1925. Perhaps something more definite will emerge in time for the centenary of his birth on February 23, 1982, but it seems unlikely.

NICOLAS WALTER,
134 Northumberland Road,
Harrow, Middlesex.

'Crystal Vision'

Sir, - Reviewing Gilbert Sorrentino's *Crystal Vision* (December 4), Valentine Cunningham writes: "Stories pack *Crystal Vision*; each of its chapters encloses a narrative, a fiction, a dream, obsession or fantasy." True enough. What the review does not note is that the seventy-eight chapters of Sorrentino's book correlate with the seventy-eight cards of the Tarot pack. The first twenty-two chapters go through the twenty-two Trumps Major in order, with The Fool (0) inserted between Judgment (20) and The World (21) in the manner described by A. E. Waite in his *Pictorial Key to the Tarot*. The remaining fifty-six chapters go through the four suits of the pack: Wands,

Cups, Swords, and Pentacles. The "narrative, fiction, dream, obsession or fantasy" of each chapter is inspired by and/or tropes with the image on the corresponding Tarot card. Since the Trumps Major and the suit cards are known as the Greater and the Lesser Arcana, respectively, it is not surprising that, as Cunningham writes, "*Arcane* is one of the Arab's favourite vocabularies" and given Sorrentino's oblique way with his sources, neither is it surprising that (Cunningham again) "his, and our, *arcana* are just too frequently not ... lucidified."

I am not suggesting that a reading of Sorrentino's book in the light of its Tarot connection (I haven't done such a reading) and the text's nagging self-reference (which Cunningham notices) would turn up a pat "meaning" that would enable us finally to expound and neatly to catalogue the work. I do think such a reading would reveal that the book has more order and less jumble than your reviewer implies. Sorrentino is one of the maddest post-modern fabulators, but he is also one of the most methodical.

LOUIS MACKKEY,
Department of Philosophy, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas 78712.

Women and Pornography

Sir, - In seeking to make light of a serious issue, J. G. Weightman (January 11) has brought the full weight of his intellect to bear upon a joke. Our logo, the steam iron, is not a "subconscious release". Were Professor Weightman more of an active participant in domestic labour, he would not fail to understand the pun. Were he to think more seriously about feminism, perhaps he would not fail to understand the metaphor, that our chains can be forged again as weapons - ploughshares into swords, if you like.

ROS DE LANEROLLE,
Women's Press, 124 Shoreditch High Street, London E1 6JE.

Sir, - "Is it too much to hope" (Jane Aiken Hodge, Letters, January 15) that under its new regime your paper will give significant books about pornography to pornographers for review?

KEITH WALKER,
Flat N, 51 Guilford Street, London WC1.

Charles I's Executioner

Sir, - I wonder if, during the course of all the archival research of the last thirty years, any of your readers have turned up any clues as to the identity of the man who headed Charles I?

According to a correspondent in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1767

Information, please

Sir Charles Harding Firth (1857-1936), Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, 1904-25; whereabouts of any letters and papers, apart from those in the Bodleian; for a study of the historical profession in England.

J. P. Kenyon,
Department of Modern History,
University of St Andrews, Fife.

Holts: any appropriate extracts on this topic - fiction, diaries, letters, poetry, or good anecdotes; for an anthology in preparation.

Hilary Rubinstein,
61 Clarendon Road, London W11.

George Ives (1857-1950), poet and zoologist; any information concerning possible representatives of his literary estate.

John Stokes,
Department of English, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL.

Bernardo Neri, sixteenth-century Florentine and member of an embassy sent to Portugal by the Grand Duke Cosimo I of Tuscany (1569-71); any relevant information; for a biography of Fernão Mendes Pinto (1510-83).

Rebecca Katz,
300 South El Camino Drive, Beverly Hills, California 90212.

Thomas P. Puttick and William S. Simpson, first proprietors of the London auction firm, Puttick & Simpson, at 191 Piccadilly, 1846-59; any biographical information about them and subsequent owners during these periods; correspondence, papers, legal or business records; for a historical introduction to a study of their many sales of musical materials.

James Coover,
Department of Music, State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, New York 14214.

(Vol. 37, pp. 544-49) a certain William Walker confessed on his deathbed in 1700 to being the executioner. Such respectable authorities as the *Dictionary of National Biography* and C. V. Wedgwood in *The Trial of Charles I*, 1964 claim that Charles was beheaded by the common hangman, Richard Brandon. Their evidence includes statements made in tracts published at the time of Brandon's death later in 1649, and allegations made by defence witnesses in the trial in 1660 of William Hulet, supposedly the assistant at Charles's execution; but there is equally authoritative contemporary evidence that Brandon refused the job. Moreover, at Hulet's trial, one of the witnesses, Lieutenant-Colonel Nelson, claimed that the man who beheaded Charles was named Walker.

Amongst a number of people suggested as the real executioner was the journalist Henry Walker. The William Walker who made the deathbed confession was Henry's brother. Even apart from William's deathbed confession, Henry, a busy-body scribbler, seems less plausible as an executioner than William, who was a sergeant in the New Model Army and confidential secretary to John Lambert. It is known that the Parliamentary leaders tried to recruit executioners from amongst the army sergeants; Hulet, the assistant executioner, was himself an army sergeant, and was apparently so nervous during the execution that, after the beheading, when he had to hold aloft Charles's head, he dropped it on the boards. There seems no reason why, if Brandon was the headman, he should not have employed one of his regular assistants; nor, since Brandon's department and even his technique with an axe, were perfectly familiar to the execution-going public - he had previously beheaded both Strafford and Laud - why he should have accommodated himself with the mask, wig and false beard that the executioner wore on this occasion.

In all that I have read concerning the executioner's identity, I have never seen William Walker's deathbed confession discussed. Incidentally, according to Queen Henrietta Maria's chaplain, the headman "was said to be a minister" (quoted in J. G. Muddiman's *Trial of King Charles the First*, 1928). Henry Walker had as a young man been ordained a deacon, but was afterwards suspended, and his sacerdotal character cannot have been widely known. His brother William was a man of considerable education - the mathematical papers he left at his death were written in Latin (see *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 38, p. 10) - and as a man of education may well have acted as a regimental preacher in the army; equally the term "minister" might, in seventeenth-century usage, refer to his employment by Lambert.

JOHN SCHELLENBERGER,
60 St Barnabas Road, Cambridge.

Conrad Russell (1878-1947): whereabouts of any letters written by him; for a collected edition.

Georgiana Blackston,
6 Markham Square, London SW3.

Countess Russell, formerly Countess von Arnim, Elizabeth of Elizabeth and her *German Garden*; copies sought of her daughter Lieke's biography of her mother, published under the pseudonym "Leslie de Charms"; and "Elizabeth's" own autobiography, *All the Dogs in my Life*.

Penelope Mortimer,
The Old Post Office, Chislehurst, Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire.

Sir Shelton Thomas, Governor and Civil-Cor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner for the Malay States (1934-60); any significant material or personal recollections; for an authorized biography.

Brian Montgomery,
11A The Gateways, London SW3.

The Midwestern muse

By Harold Beaver

RONALD PRIMEAU:
Beyond "Spoon River"
The Legacy of Edgar Lee Masters
217pp. University of Texas Press.
\$14.00.
0 292 70731 2

"The night is the prairie's odeum," sang Edgar Lee Masters in 1941. It is the churchyard's odeum. The night is the peace of sleeping herds. Near falling Concord Church that stands a ruin above the prairie lands. There is something ludicrous about that "odeum" and "singular" "rune," turning to a "ruin" above the Illinois prairie. Though minimally endowed with a gift for language or rhythm even, Masters all his life affected the panache of a major poet. His early success with *Spoon River Anthology* (1915) clearly went to his head. This Chicago lawyer, in his concern for the disintegration of traditional communities and rural values, published over fifty further volumes between 1916 and 1942. None of them has been much read. He was shrugged aside just as Vachel Lindsay, whom he hailed as "America's greatest lyric poet," has been shrugged aside. He spiritually withdrew to the Sangamon Valley (his head crammed with Goethe, Shelley and Browning) in defiance of the social and literary momentum of the twentieth century. His final volumes were aptly published in Prairie City, Illinois.

Most of the unpublished manuscripts and drafts of published poems have been gathered in the Masters Collection of the University of Texas Library in Austin. Now, under the impetus of the University of Texas Press, Ronald Primeau has attempted to restore Masters' reputation "beyond *Spoon River*." It is an uphill struggle. That mixture of half-baked philosophy and drearily provincial egotism will not attract many new readers. There will always be those eager to penetrate at least as far as *The New Spoon River* of 1924. But this critical guide seems itself to be afflicted with a tin ear.

Take "Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and the King Cobra" (1932), presented as an ambitious epic. Nowhere does the critic wince at the sheer intransigence of the images:

Romantic leanings

By Rupert Christiansen

ROGER ASSELINÉAU:
The Transcendentalist Constant in American Literature
189pp. New York University Press.
\$22.75 (paperback, \$9.10).
0 8147 0572 3

The blurb claims this to be a work of "authentic originality," but a collection of essays which sets out "to isolate the fundamental Romanticism of American literature" would have to be profoundly eccentric to deserve that accolade — the theme has been pretty well done to death, one would have thought, in the forty-odd years since Matthiessen's *American Renaissance*.

Roger Asselinéau teaches American literature in France, but he does not take advantage of the perspective this offers him. The essays are largely descriptive and narrative, and the critical technique, when it is not simple — "Most American novelists

are essentially poets, who write romances rather than true novels" — can become embarrassing. "There are as many kinds of humor as there are shades of color in a rainbow." The first half of the book is concerned with Whitman, while the second meanders through Dreiser's verse, *Desire under the Elms*, *Winesburg, Ohio*, Hemingway's "spiritual journey," and *A Streetcar Named Desire* — following the slimmest of connecting transcendentalist threads. There is nothing much to argue with, but the book's potential usefulness for sixth-formers is undermined by Asselinéau's failure to deal with either Emerson or the European Romantics such as Novalis, Schelling, Coleridge and Carlyle, who provided the great part of the intellectual base for American Transcendentalism. Asselinéau's last chapter deals with the forgotten Walter Lowenfels, who lived in Paris in the 1920s where he was a friend of Miller and Anais Nin, and who later became a staunch communist, suffering under McCarthy. His Whitmanesque poetry has at least passing interest.

the city and are divided into those concerned mainly with literature or literary subjects and those which relate literature and the city to other subjects such as politics, history or education. The book contains contributions by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Joyce Kilmer, Tom Morrison, Stephen Spender, Alfred Kazin, Leslie Fiedler, James Baldwin, Chaim Potok and Bruno Bettelheim.

Nature is a sleeping spirit. Nature is a trance, a mass dragged by eternity, a solid jelly, a self-containment. A petrification which cannot arise from itself. Or get out of itself, or look upon itself. Man has escaped from this deep catalepsy. He has soared up, and can look down.

We are asked to respond to this Shelleyan mumbo-jumbo as an ecstatic breakthrough, even as "the rhythm of three bars changed to the rhythm of four bars" a kind of "scherzo." These may be notes for a poem, but they have not been fused into an exultant synecdoche — an "expiring flash" as he calls it in another awkwardly bastard phrase.

Ronald Primeau's vocabulary matches his author's in its incompetence. "Masters' prairie poems are photographs of the countryside," he writes, "penetrating to the hidden meanings of the mystic." Detail is "photographic": hills, fences, barns and schoolhouses come into view album. But the value of these arrested images is never questioned. To what extent was Masters a Don Quixote tilting at "the circumambient gas" (in T. E. Hulme's phrase)? To what extent was he absorbed in the spirit of Greece? To what extent was "his predisposition to the classics and to mysticism" part of the "paradox of modernism"? A vowels of intent are not enough. Why should the embarrassing farrago of "Amphitrix" be equated with "Epipsychidion"? Nothing ultimately rebuts Bernard Duffey's charge in *The Chicago Renaissance in American Letters* (1954): "With the exception of a few individual poems, perhaps a dozen in all, Masters' work was dull, tremendously garish, and wholly unenlightened by the imaginative and dramatic richness which had marked *Spoon River*."

Yet Masters launched his poems as epics "to interpret and memorialize Illinois and the country which had given so many distinguished men to America." He himself memorialized Whitman and Vachel Lindsay as upholders of a "spiritual" America that had given way to an "imperialized" republic, just as "songs of liberty" smothered by materialism and the mercantile bureaucracy, had every-

where given way to "satire and anathema." "Budding Virgils and Homers" were nipped, but Juvenals grew up: For resistance, not to say revolution, is outlawed in America. Free speech is banned, and protesters must steal through the interplex of things forbidden. To do that they must pick words which deceive the swine or which are regarded by them as mere poetry and of no dangerous moment. All this has happened in America, and much of it since Whitman died. (1937)

That is why Masters had it in for Mark Twain, who abandoned his native Missouri for Connecticut, who Whitman, who played the philistine clown for cash, and made his living by burlesquing the follies of the human race. Such a heritage suffocated exultant spirits, those mute inglorious Miltons of the Midwest who might turn out to be as valuable as Lindsay, Masters exoriated not only the "factory spirit" but the whole Judeo-Christian biblical tradition on which (he argued) the United States was based. "In spite of New England theology America started under the influence of Hellas," he declaimed. "Thomas Jefferson's was the great

Plotting against depravity

By Stephen Fender

DAVID S. REYNOLDS:
Faith in Fiction
The Emergence of Religious Literature in America
269pp. Harvard University Press.
\$15.75.
0 674 73901 9

The first full-length study of a new subject should please the serious reader as much as the resourceful scholar who has developed it — at least assuming the "field" is really assuredly in: he is able to list, in a selective chronology, over 300 works of American religious fiction written between the Revolution and the Civil War. One serious reader would have been better pleased had the book been better written, but there is no doubting its importance, even if only as an expanded catalogue raisonné.

Mr Reynolds divides American religious fiction into seven categories ranging from early "oriental" and visionary tales, through fiction exposing the strengths and weaknesses of various Christian denominations, to stories based on episodes in the Bible, late examples of which appear as *Ben Hur* and films by Cecil B. DeMille. The gist of the argument seems to be that American novelists avoided doctrinal issues until such time as they came to make little difference in the everyday lives of their readers. The orientalist mode, and Voltaire to Giovanni Verga's *Turkish Spy* (1884), was used by writers like Benjamin Franklin and Royall Tyler, not in order to confront the harsh doctrine of Calvinism, but to displace it on to another level, of a general beneficence to man, to all good religions — oriental faiths being commonly, though inaccurately supposed to be less particular about their doctrine.

But even novels addressing the issue of Calvinism promulgated good — an odd claim, considering the Calvinist's distrust of works. The hero of the Reverend John Sabin's *Charles Dren* (1816) claims that if children are religious they might not be bad, but polished in their behaviour. (So much for naughty boys.) (See the doctors in the temple.) Or else the doctrine takes place off the page, rather in the form of a Moral Reformation Play. To Reynolds's plot summary "The Rev. Mr. Sabin's *Charles Dren*" (1975), by the Reverend Ebenezer Bradford) experiments with various

mind and vision that tried to commit America to the beauty and the rationalism of Hellas." The rebirth of the Greek spirit, based on loving democracy, was to bond a nation without common blood, without common religion, without (pace *New World* (1937) puffed his populist theme:

The New World, too, with neither myths nor gods, With no traditions save those of the People. With never a theme distinctive, save the People. Must sing the People or go down to time. As a nation songless. Or a nation which never found its soul.

That smacks of the thirties. Yet, in other respects, Masters had long outgrown his age. He was already forty-seven by the time *Spoon River Anthology* was published. At that moment, in 1915, he had caught the tide in his resistance to sentimental regionalism; caught a new form, too, in those free-verse epiphsies interlacing to shape an elegy written in a Midwestern country churchyard. The inspiration may have come from MacKall's *Greek Anthology*, but the idea of epiphsies as confessional monologues spoken by the deceased was original, as was the idea of the long poem as a dramatic mosaic of

anti-Calvinist views — deism, Arminianism, Universalism — before he is persuaded by Harriet to accept the orthodox doctrines of predestination and total depravity. Rescued both by his love for Harriet and by God's "free and sovereign grace," Damon at last marries Harriet and becomes a Congregationalist minister. The same feature can be observed in novels written against the Calvinists. In *The Recollections of Jotham Anderson* (1824) Henry Ware, Jr has his hero struggle to validate Unitarianism over two "long and painful" years. Refusing (to put it in the only words in Reynolds's book that could be described as wry) to give "samples of his scholarship on this pivotal subject," Jotham declares with a certain insouciance, "It would take too much room to detail the progress of my experience at this time."

Perhaps Calvinist doctrine was too insubstantial, except in the intricate arguments of Jonathan Edwards, to make the stuff of fiction, or maybe its avoidance is part of the inevitable logic of novels, which will go on paying attention to human behaviour at the expense of theological motivation. Reynolds does not

say which alternative he favours in any case his judgment is not in ways to be trusted. On the well-known case of Maria Monk's *Disclosures* (1836), which alleged the incest and infanticide in the basement of a Montreal nunnery, and shown to be an imposture and, surprisingly belated inquiry, writes, "If Maria Monk had not told the exact truth, she had at least produced a fictional satire on religion." By the same token, the *Peccolus of the Elders of Zion* could be described as a fictional satire on Judaism.

If Reynolds is to deserve his description in the blurb as "a historian of American literature and culture," he must learn to tell a fiction from a lie. In his defence, though, it must be said that the sheer amount of material would make it hard for anyone to discriminate in every case. Alone emerge with an arresting upmer, pulling it all together, it is numerous past summaries and post-trian taxonomies occasionally offend the reader with unassailable detail, he at least presents a mass of data to which stronger-minded critics can get to work.

Hollywood sequel

By Peter Kemp

NOEL POLK:
Faulkner's Requiem for a Nun
A Critical Study
273pp. Indiana University Press.
\$10.50.
0 253 13302 5

Noel Polk believes that *Requiem for a Nun*, generally regarded as "a simple, direct, simple-minded" — is really "a major work in the Faulkner canon." He largely rests his case on the claim that Gavin Stevens, the book's moral arbiter but actually the villain of the piece: if he can carry this point, Polk seems to feel, he can rescue the novel from the judgment that it is inferior and simplistic.

His alert perusal of the text — and its origins and drafts — supplies much that is valuably thought-provoking. But, for all the ingenious breathtaking of Stevens's motives and the bewilderment of Temple Drake's behaviour, Polk's often elaborately apologetic interpretations don't convincingly reverse customary assessments of what the book is saying.

Even if they did, he would still be some way from displaying that it is neglected masterpiece. As disabbling as the book's moral crudities (which Polk tries to argue away) are, all too obviously a sequel to *Sanctuary*, *Requiem for a Nun* seems severely weakened by inserted chunks of new-readers-now-read-on recapitulation. And — an excursion on Faulkner's part into not merely drama, but melodrama — it is also damaged by a coarse smartness, more indigenous to Hollywood than Yoknapatawpha County. Snapping out her "touchés" and "Oh God's," feverishly toying with cigarettes and drinks, Temple Drake especially "solgnee, in an open for coit brille and tense" — recalls John Davis in some chromium-plated case against the novel, this is surely something that an advocate of it like Professor Polk should take into account.

PORTAGE: INLAND 154p. ARBOOD: UP
SECOND-CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. POSTAL PERMIT NO. 1000
AIR FREIGHT: NEW YORK, N.Y. PERMIT NO. 1000
ZARPS OF GREAT BRITAIN INC. 201 202 STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10011

Illuminating the universe

By Redmond O'Hanlon

IVAN TOLSTOY:
James Clerk Maxwell
A Biography
183pp. Edinburgh: Canongate. £9.95.
0 86241 010 X

It was really a frog that kicked the old world of physics to pieces. In one reversed leap the skinned right leg of *Rana Latastei*, contracting as a result of discharge from an electric machine in Galvani's laboratory, signalled the end of the visual, literary, theological physics whereby the common concerns of man and his geometer God had once been obviously applicable to a contained cosmos. The very odd and hitherto neglected man who, above all others, brought about the revolution whose imagination set limits to Newton's universe and provided the theoretical stimulus of Einstein's, is the elusive subject of this small but impressive biography.

James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879), with an early choice of researches which he never thereafter abandoned, conducted his first experiment when he was two years old. Beginning his investigation into optics, he was characteristically bold in the announcement of his first result. Placing his plate at an angle to the lines of light radiating through the window into his bedroom, he discovered a bright spot to be dancing across the walls at his command. "It's the sun" he cried. "I got it with the tin plate!"

Born into the Scottish landed gentry, the only son of middle-aged parents who doted on him and recorded his every precocious move with delight, he always had abundant opportunities for exploration. His interest in classical mechanics began early: "He is a very happy man," his mother wrote to her sister, "he has great work with doors, locks, keys, etc., and show me how it does" — never out of his mouth. As to the bells, they will not rust, he stands sentry in the kitchen, and Mag runs thro' the house ringing them all by turns, or he rings, and sends Bessy to see and shout to let him know, and he drags papa all over to show him the holes where the wires go through."

But the small disadvantages of privilege soon became apparent, too. His father, a good, kind, dilettante inventor with an aristocratic indifference to appearances and a Calvinist belief in an honest declaration of function and purpose, who liked to design all the objects that he used, from his own trousers to his own house, proudly sent his son to the Edinburgh Academy in a sensible, quasi-indestructible, wholly appalling pair of square-toed boots with patent, reinforced bronze clasps, particularly at variance with the current fashion amongst conformist schoolboys, and, indeed, so deeply original as to be unlike any other footwear seen since man began to make pictorial records of himself.

The long years of persecution by his contemporaries began; and he developed a speech impediment which he never outgrew, lapsing into "strophic statements" whenever he was ill-at-ease, his thought apparently outpacing his words. But he also developed two lines of defence which, equally, never deserted him. Knotted up by his rage as he was bullied, and gagged by his own incoherence under stress, he would register his emotions in controlled anger, not quite approaching tranquility and, once he had escaped, would caricature his muscled opponents in blithely humorous poems, juvenilia which he then distributed as broadsheets. Partly as a result of the exercise he was top of his class in English long before his talent for mathematics became obvious; and he also found that his personal time and space began to empty of practical troubles and demand to be filled with other types of thought.

Motherless from the age of seven, almost friendless at school, he turned to comfort to the self-contained, therapeutic, ordered and provable

truths of geometry. And he discovered, to his delight, that the great artificial game, whose rules had been so intricately constructed over twenty-three centuries, was absurdly easy to play. He could see the dance of moving figures in hypothetical space as clearly as the sunset on his own nursery wall. His life was transformed.

In June, 1844, he writes to his father "I have made a tetrahedron, a dodecahedron, and two other hedrons whose names I don't know"; at thirteen, besides reading Hobbes (he is marginally outclassed here by Einstein, who at thirteen had mastered Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*) he had produced his first piece of original research, a discussion of ovals in which he successfully generalized the theory of the ellipse. His paper was presented for him at the April meeting of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and his method of constructing the requisite curves was judged to be simpler than the one scheme used by Descartes. His official career had begun.

In the holidays he would retreat to his laboratory in the family home at Glenlair:

I have regularly set up shop now above the wash-house at the gate, in a garret. I have an old door set on two barrels, and two chairs, of which one is safe, and a skylight above, which will slide up and down. On the door (or table) there is a lot of bowls, jugs, plates, jam jars [jars], etc., containing water, salt, soda, sulphuric acid, blue vitriol, plumbago ore; also broken glass, iron, and copper wire, copper and zinc plate, bees' wax, sealing wax, clay, rosin, charcoal, lens, a Smees's Galvanic apparatus, a countless variety of little beetles, spiders and wood lice, which fall into the different liquids and poison themselves. I intend to get up some more galvanism in jam piggies. . . . First, I thought a beetle was a good conductor, so I embedded one in wax (not at all cruel, because I slew him in boiling water in which he never kicked), leaving his back out; but he would not do. . . .

July 6. To-day I have set out to the coppering of the jam pig which I polished yesterday. I have stuck in the wires better than ever, and it is going on at a great rate, being a rainy day, and the skylight shut and a smell of hydrogen gas. I have left it for an hour to read Poisson, as I am pleased with him today. . . . He tells lies about the way people make barometers, etc.

Maxwell had already developed his own creative methods of problem-solving ("I did not find the impediment till I had dreamt over it properly, I think I consider the best mode of resolving difficulties of a particular kind") and a clear idea of the proper relations of science and social life: "When at table he often seemed abstracted from what was going on, being absorbed in observing the effects of refracted light in the finger-glasses, or in trying some experiment with his eyes — seeing around a corner, making invisible stereoscopes, and the like." Cambridge was clearly the place for such a man.

So after three years at Edinburgh University, Maxwell transferred to Peterhouse, and then to Trinity in search of the best mathematical training, which the English-speaking world appeared to offer. The qualification is necessary, because it then seemed that the centre of mathematical research might be in danger of moving to the Continent, to Germany (Bessel, Gauss), to Switzerland (Bücher, the Bernoullis) or to France (most impressive of all — Lagrange, Laplace, Poisson, Cauchy, Fourier, Fresnel). But it was seen at once in Cambridge that a new British star had arrived: A fellow student remembered his tutor

talking to me this evening about Maxwell. He says he is unquestionably the most extraordinary man he has met within the whole range of his experience; he says it

appears impossible for Maxwell to think incorrectly on physical subjects. . . . He looks upon him as a great genius, with all his eccentricities, and prophesies that one day he will shine as a light in physical science. . . .

His rooms festooned with the now familiar companions of his thinking, from his bits of magnetized steel to his pieces of boiled beetle, he would work with great intensity late into the night, and then from "2 to 2.30 a.m. he took exercise by running along the upper corridor, down the stairs, along the lower corridor, and then up the stairs, and so on, until the inhabitants along his track got up and *perdis* behind their sporting doors to have shots at him with boots, hair-brushes, etc., as he passed." But despite his odd habits, his spasmodic speech, and his broad Scots accent, a contemporary, F.M. Butler (later Master of Trinity), remembered that "His position among us . . . was unique. He was the one acknowledged man of genius among the undergraduates. We understood even then that, though barely of age, he was in his own line of inquiry not a beginner but a master. His name was already familiar to men of science."

If he lived, it was certain that he would be one of the small but sacred band to whom it would be given to enlarge the bounds of human knowledge. He became a member of The Apostles; he was Second Wrangler in 1854; and he was elected to a Fellowship at Trinity the following year. "I am in great luxury," he wrote to his aunt, "having but 2 pups, . . . and am able to read the rest of the day, so I have made a big hole in some subjects I wish to know. . . . A nightingale has taken up his quarters just outside my window, and works away every night. He is at it very fierce now. At night the owls relieve him, softly sighing after their fashion."

Maxwell, too, worked fiercely every night. He published a paper outlining his analysis of colour perception which established the basis of modern colorimetry and which, like his explanation of Saturn's rings, his contribution to the theory of fluids and solids, or the work which led to his claim, with Boltzmann, to be the founding father of modern statistical mechanics, only now seem to be a routine brilliance by comparison with his mainstream work which succeeded or accompanied it. For in 1855 he seriously and systematically began to develop the mathematical mechanisms which, by 1864, had enabled him to produce his extraordinary illumination of the structure of the universe; which allowed him to redeem space from its emptiness; to make electricity, a quirky group of phenomena on the distant margins of experience — pointing leostars, amber rods, inspired by static electricity, lightning-meltd and magnetized spoons of a Sheffield merchant — into a quantity as fundamental as mass; to deconstruct absolute measurements and absolute times; and to usher in the far cosmic framework of our modern world, as well as its near, atomic infinites.

In the eighteenth century, Galvani had ascribed the kick of the frog's leg in Bologna laboratory to some kind of biological current; but as Alessandro Volta was to demonstrate, he had actually discovered the principle of the battery. The leg muscle was merely acting as a fluid layer between two metals; and a continuous current could be generated simply by placing a damp cloth between a zinc and a copper plate. This discovery made the quantitative study of currents possible and so opened the way to the eventual synthesis of the study of electricity, with that of magnetism. In 1820, Ørsted placed his compass near to a current-carrying wire and observed the deflection of its needle. André Marie Ampère then set about measuring and calculating the magnetic forces generated by electric currents and eventually formulated a theory which James Clerk Maxwell described him as the "Newton of Electricity."

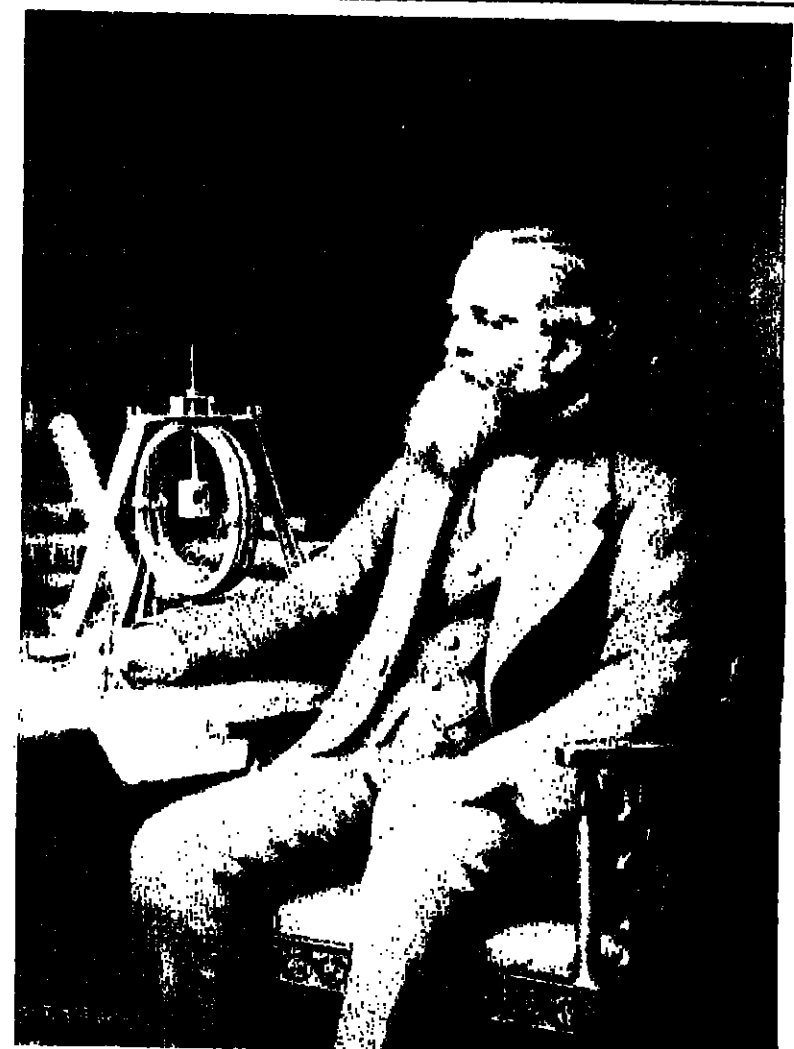
Maxwell knew that there is no particular reason why our brains, which have evolved (or, as he would have said, been created) to deal with the immediate problems posed by our mundane surroundings, should be equipped to provide a true description of nature beyond the reach of our senses. But as he wrote in an essay for the Apostles: "That analogies appear to exist in plain in the face of things, for all parables, fables, similes, metaphors, tropes, and figures of speech are analogies, natural or revealed, artificial or created. Neither is there any question as to the occurrence of analogies to our minds. They are as plenty as reasons, not to say blackberries." They certainly remained as plenty as blackberries to Maxwell, dotted all over his thicket of algebraic exploration; and although "the whole framework of science, up to the very pinnacle of philosophy," sometimes

seemed to him "a dissected model of nature, and sometimes a natural growth on the inner surface of the mind," paradigm after imagined paradigm was used and then discarded in the remorseless progress of his equations. He suggested that space is full of an imponderable fluid that cannot be compressed, fluid that cannot be vortices, or of numberless ball-bearings, until, in his last great official synthesis *A Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism* (1873) containing the four parts "Electrostatics," "Electrodynamics," "Magnetism" and "Electromagnetism" which Maxwell characteristically insisted should be read concurrently, the calculations are allowed to stand on their own, and even the author is only mentioned once.

And these initial calculations, these apparently impossibly abstract equations, this exuberant intellectual archery, also produced such plunder as the wireless, the television, the high-energy particle accelerator, and the new rules for new games — quantum mechanics, special relativity, general relativity.

Maxwell became Professor of Natural Philosophy at Aberdeen in 1856 and married the daughter of his college Principal in 1858. "James," pronounced his aunt, "has lived, hitherto at the gate of heaven." Still, his work suffered no decline and, indeed, Mrs Maxwell may well have unwittingly preserved its lucid continuity. She was heard to protest at a Cambridge party, "James, you're beginning to enjoy yourself; it is time we go home." He was all too conscious, in any case, of the dangers of prolonged psychic exposure to an empty and indifferent cosmos. "It is in personal union with my friends," he wrote to R. B. Litchfield, "that I hope to escape the despair, which belongs to the contemplation of the outward aspect of things with human eyes."

He would also escape in his letters, in occasional Dickensian caricature of his Glenlair neighbours where one literary widow was to be found, he says, "charming never so wisely with her hair about her ears and her elbows on her knees, on a low stool, talking Handel, or Ruskin, or Macaulay, or general paths of an unprotected female, passing off into criticism, witicism, pleasant unmitigated along, sporting and betting." He and his wife would read Chaucer,



Sir James Clerk Maxwell painted posthumously by R. H. Campbell in 1929 for the Institution of Electrical Engineers, London. On the table is the revolving coil apparatus, designed by Lord Kelvin, with which, in 1863, the first determination of the value of the ohm in electromagnetic units was made by Maxwell himself working with Balfour Stewart and Fleming Jenkin.

مكتبة الأصل

Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton together in the evenings, and then start again at the beginning. He was fluent in French, German and Italian "although, for some reason", his biographer reassures us, "he had difficulty with Dutch".

He moved to King's College, London, in 1860, to the vacant chair of Physics and Astronomy, but resigned five years later in order to concentrate on his own work and on the management of his 6,000 acres at Glenlair - where a special letter box was "sunk into the wall of the abbey" to receive his incoming scientific correspondence and to hold his increasingly frequent outgoing papers - until he was finally recalled to Cambridge to set up the Cavendish Laboratory. There is one last, fine contemporary account of Maxwell at work in the new department which he had founded, and to which he walked every day accompanied by his dog Tobie.

When working... or when thinking about a problem, he had a habit of whistling, not loudly, but in a half-subdued manner, no particular tune discernible, but a sort of running accompaniment to his inward thoughts. He could carry the full strength of his mental faculties rapidly from one subject to another, and could pursue his studies under distractions which most students would find intolerable, such as a loud conversation in the room where he was at work. On those occasions he used, in a manner, to take his dog into his confidence, and would say softly "Tobie, Tobie", at intervals, and time would at last say (for example, "It must be so; Plato (i.e. Platon), thou reasonest well." He would then join in the conversation.

He died, as precociously as he had intellectually begun to live, at a mere forty-three, killed by the same kind of stomach cancer which had deprived him of his mother.

Ivan Tolstoy has written a very

good popular biography which, with Lewis Campbell and W. Garnett's indispensable *The Life of James Clerk Maxwell* (1882), and C.W.F. Everitt's more technical *James Clerk Maxwell, Physicist and Natural Philosopher* (1975), will become part of the essential reading about an almost inaccessible man whose imagination and mathematical virtuosity filled once empty space with jostling fields of force, with bundles of invisible wires binding the stronger the tighter and closer they were bunched together, with the muscle fibres of the planetary system (and, eventually, with the unseen revolving particle clouds of the vast spaces within the atom). It is served with a modest index and with a small but accurate summary of the all-too-few scholarly works about Maxwell - he was a scientist too revolutionary, after all, too brilliant and too original, to be understood by more than five or six of his contemporaries.

One of the thirteen black-and-white plates movingly points the contrast with that other scientific titan of the nineteenth century: today Glenlair house, half-gutted by fire, roofless, broken-backed, decays uncelebrated, while Downe House, a fitting memorial to its supposedly reviled but in fact admired and thoroughly accessible patriarch, Charles Darwin, is meticulously preserved. And as the winds from the Rhinos of Kells blow across the abandoned graveyard and the ruined chapel near the village of Parton, in Galloway, where James Clerk Maxwell lies buried, Darwin is honoured in Westminster Abbey. Still, one small comfort is that neither of these great men had surplus intellectual or emotional energy left from their vast labours to care half a sigh for their future standing. And one large comfort is that somewhere there may be another two year old, perhaps, catching the sun with his little plate, or deconstructing his electromagnetic space invader machine with a yelp of delight, who will a few decades hence, and with the same combination of tireless industry and apparently effortless elegance, unify, for us, general relativity and quantum mechanics.

Setting the social scene

By William Coleman

G. S. ROUSSEAU and ROY PORTER
(Editors)
The Ferment of Knowledge
Studies in the Historiography of
Eighteenth-Century Science
500pp. Cambridge University Press.
£25.
0 521 22599 X

The history of science is a hot affair, the more programmatic enthusiasts in this volume declare, have recently been or soon will be totally transformed. One of the editors, George S. Rousseau, however, admits a different perspective: "All this radical alteration" in the proclaimed scholarly purpose and, especially, methods of the history of science "is ultimately linguistic. That is, [I] sense that one language has been substituted for another, in this case for that of biography and the natural sciences." This intuition is no doubt correct, if limited, and it is useful information for the reader of certain essays in *The Ferment of Knowledge* that aim to teach us our new business.

The worry on the brow of the contemporary historian of science is not a new one. Recent years have heard renewed appeals for liberation from the seeming constraints of the proud intellectual standards of the scientists themselves. They may conceive their enterprise as an eminently, even exclusively rational undertaking, but historians, it appears, know better. They must recognize that natural science, being only an "esoteric sub-culture", stands desperately in need of description and analysis as an historically situated cultural enterprise. Contextualism must transcend, but not, happily, drive out intellectualism, and it must be the new contextualism, drawing upon the social sciences, and not the old, which found its context only in other intellectualist and hence suspect retreats (philosophy, religion, the occult).

The historian of science must adopt principles and methods from sociology and anthropology and, a less specific but important matter, be more sensitive also to political considerations, for politics penetrates the substance of scientific thought as well as translating scientific conclusions for social consumption. A contextualist history of science insists that pure "natural knowledge" does not exist and never has existed. Context, of course, is social and it is groups which produce knowledge just as they produce other goods. Goods also possess their own dynamics and generate distinctive patterns of behaviour.

Thus will the history of science make its escape from the weary confines of Great Scientists, Victoria of Reason and the Benevolence of Science. Thus it will avoid the sorry fate awaiting diplomatic, political and, not least intellectual history, methodologically sterilized by their orientation towards personalities, and thus also be armed boldly to face the fact that the world of natural science constitutes, indeed an esoteric subculture and one deeply involved in the affairs of the mind though not uniquely defined thereby.

"The purpose of this volume is to exhibit new approaches to the history of science during the Enlightenment and to describe and evaluate methods appropriate to the new task. Most of the dozen essays attend carefully to this objective. A few authors, peacefully adrift on familiar seas, have simply written technical reports or have summarized without additional comment recent understanding of eighteenth-century events; here the historiographic content is small or altogether absent. Contextual history claims to be, of course, the persistent element, even though Rom Harré disconcertingly opens the discussion by asserting that "the enlightenment was nothing but an intellectual movement" for whose appropriation social context is both vague and irrelevant. An untended drooliness, perhaps, and one immediately corrected by Simon

Shaffer and Steven Shapin. These authors, writing with great earnestness, tell us precisely what the new contextual history must be and how it is to be done; they also inform us of the significance and urgency of the cause.

Shaffer insists that eighteenth-century "natural philosophy" must not be construed as a unique or uniquely scientific discourse. Furthermore, historians' insistence on the influence of Newton has created the monolith called Newtonianism, which in turn has tended to define virtually all the dimensions of science during the early Enlightenment. *The Ferment of Knowledge*, it is (Newtonian) matter theory that commands particular attention. Efforts merely to preserve the centrality of matter theory, by bringing to bear upon it ever more disparate elements of scholarship, are, Shaffer urges, inadequate. They only perpetuate without further examination the over-intellectualized unity of Newtonianism. It is, in fact, just that unity that is in question or, more precisely, which the advocates of a coherent natural philosophy of the Enlightenment must test and demonstrate to be a reality. The appeal to sociological and anthropological perspectives introduces promising but still problematic choices, for now biographical elements return and the role of individual or collective cosmologies must be dealt with. Seemingly, Shaffer is disconcerted with this work also. Though offering no considered programme of research, he ends his argument with a sharp juxtaposition of means for assaying (and creating!) scientific statements: reason speaks and culture accommodates, or scientific validity is itself a cultural product, an element in the social exercise of power (thus Michel Foucault) - and then insists that "a choice of historical methods in science is a choice of attitudes to the articulation of science and social relations." For historians of science this probably means that the only choice forbidden to them is to ignore or fail to emphasize these social relations.

In a theoretically more explicit essay, in which matter theory is again given great prominence (the volume in general tends to emphasize the disproportionately British thought and institutions), Shapin pours another bucket of the same cement over the feet of intellectualist enterprise: are reminded that that the scientific enterprise is a social activity, a social expression, the "social uses" of science, must be understood as applying in two directions. That science provides the terms for social apologetics as well as practical action is widely acknowledged; that society in turn exerts obvious and in many cases less than obvious influences upon not only the institutional structure of science but upon its methods and substantive conclusions, is a less common conclusion of the volume. Shapin does not explore this latter claim by bringing in new evidence but states its direction using the existing literature (notably, works by Margaret Jacob and Theodore M. Brown). Social uses thus translate into social interests. "Institutionalized representations of nature" (long-hand for what, we may suppose, is also called natural science) play a legitimizing or critical function in our society; they are intrinsic to the holding and exercise of political and economic power; ideas have consequences.

Have contextual historians of science then invented that perennial novelty, the wheel? Perhaps they have, yet their wheel seems round, and it should roll. Its familiarity should not mislead outside observers about its importance to the history of science. The intellectualist option has long prospered and there is no need to change their spots to accommodate the new programme. Contextualist historians should not want to replace the historical study of the conceptual development of science by an analysis of other, primarily social dimensions of that development. They want both perspectives to exist together and insist that science should be viewed wholely.

Perhaps, then, the history of science is to become, as some have maintained, the principal historical discipline, capitalizing on the central place that natural science has held in western culture since the start of the Enlightenment. But if such important dreams have their appeal, contextualists to *The Ferment of Knowledge* will be more modest. John L. Heilbrunn provides an admirably vivid description of a research programme which promises to display the scientist in his most intimate social setting, namely, confronting natural phenomena by means of instruments, laboratories, and institutions, the very means, each with its "social" dimension, by which systematic human conduct is maintained with obscure (in this case, electrical) events. Other essays attend more to the patterns and problems of the historical literature regarding eighteenth-century science. An unusual and happy decision has ensured the ample attention is devoted to the life and earth sciences. William F. Bynum's essay on medicine and Roy S. Porter's on the earth sciences are models of the thematic presentation of current research interests; they also suggest how many problems demand further or even initial consideration (by no means all of them in the contextual mode). Jacques Rogier's very spare discussion of biology is also rich in such possibilities. Other essays deal with epistemology, psychology, mathematics, cosmology, chemistry and technology and industrialization. The book as a whole offers guidance to the scholarly literature unavailable from any other source; and for this reason alone *The Ferment of Knowledge* is an essential bibliographical tool for anyone with even a passing interest in the period.

Few topics are altogether neglected. One, an important one, which receives too little attention is the continuity of the sciences. Ancient writers continued to dominate the medical curricula in Enlightenment universities, and textbooks by no means always reflected the achievements of the moderns. Only gradually did the vernacular replace Latin. *The Ferment of Knowledge*, contextual engine though it pretends to be, pays scant attention to those paramount instruments of the socialization of scientific activity: the school, the university and the academy. Contextualism, moreover, has not only preserved the traditional disciplinary, that is, intellectual divisions, but has entirely overlooked the great anti-intellectualist himself; amazing, the passions and loud complaints of J.-J. Rousseau and his kind make no appearance at all.

From a book such as this, whereby the aspirations and deceptions of a scholarly discipline are made wonderfully plain, the cynical reader may well conclude that historians of science have no clothes of their own. Clad in ancient tatters, they are now caught ransacking the closets of others, seeking, it appears, both cover and legitimization. How true this is and how common to virtually all domains of contemporary humanistic scholarship! And how quaint: all too rationalized save that, of the office himself, whose models in the social sciences themselves arose from and reflect the rationalistic ideals of the earlier natural sciences.

Yet these are crimes that promise to pay. Overlooking the portentous tone of certain essays here, and also those inevitable but infrequent moments when the ferment becomes decidedly quiet, the editors will congratulate the authors, and publishers for producing a volume of major scholarly and general importance. The authors recreate a world that in recent years has not received the attention that is its due, and all students of European science and society will have to attend to the suggestions offered by this rewarding collection. One may hope, too, that *The Ferment of Knowledge* will work upon the imagination and the endeavours of others whose view of Enlightenment has yet seriously to acknowledge the general importance of the character and institutions of eighteenth-century natural sciences.

Maestro of the lost soul

By John Warrack

A. DEAN PALMER:
Heinrich August Marschner 1795-1861
612pp. Bowker. £32.75.
0 8357 1114 5

It has been Heinrich Marschner's fate to languish in a pigeon-hole, labelled as a transitional figure between Weber and Wagner, occasionally taken out and dusted down for a production of *Der Vampyr* or *Hans Heiling*, then once again filed and forgotten.

The truth is more complex. For one thing, Wagner had no need of a bridge between himself and Weber; he was perfectly capable of drawing on his deep and loving knowledge of Weber unaided, indeed of ransacking the ample attention is devoted to the life and earth sciences. William F. Bynum's essay on medicine and Roy S. Porter's on the earth sciences are models of the thematic presentation of current research interests; they also suggest how many problems demand further or even initial consideration (by no means all of them in the contextual mode). Jacques Rogier's very spare discussion of biology is also rich in such possibilities. Other essays deal with epistemology, psychology, mathematics, cosmology, chemistry and technology and industrialization. The book as a whole offers guidance to the scholarly literature unavailable from any other source; and for this reason alone *The Ferment of Knowledge* is an essential bibliographical tool for anyone with even a passing interest in the period.

Without the Mountain Queen's appearance in *Hans Heiling*, Brünhilde's *Todesverkündigung* would have taken different shape; when Ruthven, the Valkyrie, interrupts Emmy singing the ballad about "der bleiche Mann", we cannot now avoid thinking of Senta's ballad being interrupted by another "bleiche Mann", the Flying Dutchman; and though she has a touch of Euryanthe, it was Rebecca, waiting anxiously for her champion in *Der Tempel und die Jüdin*, who suggested the mood of Elsa waiting for the mysterious Lohengrin.

None of these moments, each of them typical of Marschner's imagination, owes much to Weber; and the ways in which Marschner certainly did try to imitate Weber, such as in the construction of his overtures, held little of interest for Wagner. Even Marschner's chromatic harmony, which Dean Palmer sees as a source for some of Wagner's, has precedents, in Spohr and some of

Weber, for example; though certainly Marschner's attempts to develop continuously composed opera - as so often with him, more interesting for the intention than the achievement - could be said to lie somewhere between Euryanthe and *The Flying Dutchman*.

Mr Palmer goes into the details of Marschner's construction of complete operatic acts in his two brief chapters on "Style and Contribution to the History of Opera", also spelling out methodically the new roles Marschner gave to some of the old ingredients of opera - Lied, aria, Romanza, Preludio, melodrama and so on. His attempt to establish patterns of composition, to long schematic lists of how many times solos come with chorus or recitatives with ensembles, and so on; indeed, after one particularly exhausting bout of these lists, he is forced to admit that such categorization is "always fraught with difficulties" and might have been differently done by someone else.

It is, indeed, a great pity that he has not felt able to rise above an evident wish to prove his diligence every turn, and to forget the ghost of some PhD supervisor breathing down his neck so as really to write the book he could. More than half

his 600-odd pages are given over to notes, appendices and vast tables and lists of the sources he has consulted. It is really not necessary to show your workings in the margin like this. Some of his digressions suggest a similar anxiety to demonstrate thoroughness with the homework: there is not the slightest point in a whole chapter on Marschner's relations and descendants, and it is difficult to see how a discussion of *Der Vampyr* is helped by illustrations, with zoological explanation, of the bats *Phyllostoma spectum*, *Desmodus rotundus*, and a particularly ugly reference to *Desmodus rotundus*. I do see, though, that it was hard to resist telling us of ice-cream bars and cereals called "Count Dracula's Deadly Secret" and "Count Chocula" (with footnote reference).

Palmer's thoroughness is at its most rewarding not only in establishing the details of Marschner's career, which he does with an accuracy and completeness unmatched in the German literature, but in demonstrating, with full synopses, how the literary originals were fashioned into librettos - often, he is well aware, thoroughly unsatisfactory ones. Elaborate plots thronged with too many characters presented Mars-

Corporate strains

By Michael Kennedy

NICHOLAS KENYON:
The BBC Symphony Orchestra
The first fifty years, 1930 - 1980
543pp. BBC Publications. £22.50.
0 563 17617 2

To write the history of a symphony orchestra is no easy task. It must not become a sequence of biographies of conductors, yet it must explain which conductors succeeded or failed, and why. It must not become a catalogue of programmes, yet if the music performed is not listed and discussed, what point is there in the book? It must explain in readable detail some of the economics of the

orchestra and the backstage politics; and it must bear in mind that orchestras consist of a group of individual musicians, some of them highly gifted. Nicholas Kenyon's book fulfils all these conditions. He has steered a skilful course between the many pitfalls awaiting historians of a going concern.

A complication for Mr Kenyon was the nature of the BBC itself: bureaucratic, self-regarding, ingrowing organization, snugly self-sufficient to an almost unimaginable degree yet capable of employing and living with rebellious, infuriating characters. Edward Clark, for instance, was anathema to the BBC establishment, yet he existed within the BBC in a state of creative tension and while on the music staff did as much as any man to lay the

foundation of the orchestra's concern for the music of its time. He earns a noble epitaph from Kenyon: "There was scarcely any internationally significant composer of the 1930s whose work was not promoted by a discerning manner by Clark". But one disgruntled composer, Rutland Boughton, wrote to the BBC, when Clark resigned, to express his pleasure.

Kenyon's account of the genesis of the orchestra is lively and fascinating. Its beginnings were attended by luck as well as by controversy. It might never have happened but for Beecham, who in 1928 wanted to form a new orchestra and, in spite of the abuse and scorn he had poured on broadcast music, proposed an alliance with the BBC which seemed to change in its constituent clauses almost every week. Not surprisingly, the BBC lost patience with him; perhaps the greatest service Beecham did for the BBC's orchestra was to form the London Philharmonic in 1932, thereby providing a superb rival to stimulate everyone else to play better. No doubt Beecham's regime might have been something special (his performance of Sibelius's Second Symphony with the BBCSO, issued on a record, shows how he made them play), but imagination bogged at the thought of him coping with the flow of memoranda which had a finger in the pie without ever seeming to have any direct responsibility. So the luck (that took Beecham away brought in Adrian Boult, who is the hero of this book, if it can be said to have one. Here was a man who was not jealous of guest conductors, enjoyed conducting in the studio as much as in public, was a fine trainer of musicians and a good administrator, had an extraordinarily catholic taste, stood up for his players (ultimately this was his undoing), and shared John Reith's vision of the BBC Symphony Orchestra's role as that of a National Gallery of music.

But there is no doubt, too, that Boult's willingness to conduct whatever the Music Department put before him encouraged those mandarins to believe that every other conductor would be in a similar mould. Certainly they would've been disabused of that belief by Sir John Barbirolli, who was first choice as successor to Boult (and who, I know, never really had the slightest intention of accepting the offer). Kenyon sets down the full, unpleasant story of the virtual dismissal of Boult by Sir Stewart Waller, a rather pleased in the circumstances; that Boult's eventual successor, Sir Malcolm Sargent, caused the BBC so much bother. No one these days has much good to say about Sargent, and he does not af-

fectly understand the music, which he never overrates, and also a sharp eye for Marschner's not very appealing character; probably the inferior complex lay behind his bad-tempered brag that he used anonymous articles to boost his wares, though none of this seems to have prevented him from attracting four wives. Palmer's slips are few: there is the odd misprint, Spontini did not write an opera called *Olimpiade*, and the Czech musicologist Jaroslav Buzza comes out as Buzka. To call Planiché "the great English playwright" is to give the theatrical back who named Weber's *Oberon* staggeringly more than his due. Hardly less questionable is Mr Palmer's view that psychotherapy might have prevented Kleist's suicide. But above all, for its high standards of accuracy and its painstaking examination of operas we should take seriously, this first substantial study in English of Marschner is a welcome event.

ways seem to have been either likeable or tactful, but one positively warm to him in the context of this narrative. Not because one necessarily admires his stubborn reluctance to conduct works he did not like, but because it served Wilson right for appointing him. He must have known what kind of conductor Sargent was - fitting here, there and everywhere, fond of social occasions, friend of royalty, and with very decided views on composers' merits - and if the BBC thought they could turn him into a Boulton they were foolish. As for those memoranda by Maurice Johnstone, Head of Music Programmes, they read like petulant end-of-term reports by a headmaster about a recalcitrant pupil, rather than considered judgments, even if adverse, on a distinguished and experienced musician. Johnstone owed his post in London to Sargent and he, rewarded his benefactor thus: "He has no sense of public, artistic or functional responsibility".

Of other principal conductors, Schwarz fell foul of the London critics; Dorati's interesting ambition was to liberate the orchestra from its "slavery to the microphone" and to make the orchestra more independent of the BBC; Colin Davis came unseemly under the shadow of Sir William Glock's partnership with Pierre Boulez. The Glock-Boulez era (a "French revolution", Kenyon calls it) proved that the BBC Symphony Orchestra achieves its peaks when it wholeheartedly espouses the cause of contemporary music. But whereas in Boult's time the standard repertoire was also looked after extremely well, this was not the case from 1971 to 1975.

Kenyon has the gift of making vanished concerts come to life and of quoting critical commentaries which either stir old memories or make one long to have been present. He concentrates so completely on his subject that the reader may be led to forget the existence of the BBC's important regional orchestras; to have brought them into the picture would have made this book impossibly long and even more expensive, but one day somebody should relate their work to the London scene. The illustrations are on the dull side, and once or twice the author's crisp and elegant style becomes slipshod, as if the deadline was pressing at that moment. Also there are some errors: Vaughan-Williams was seventy, not sixty, in 1942, Boughton's opera is *The Lily (not Lady) Maid* and Loeffler's work is in *Der Hof (not Dream) of Tanigiles*. The appendices of first performances, personalities, the astonishing contemporary music programmes of 1931-39, and discography are very useful.

Composer in the round

By Misha Donat

R. C. ROBBINS LANDON:
Haydn
A Documentary Study
224pp. 220 illustrations, 44 in colour.
Thames and Hudson. £18.
0 500 01252 0

H. C. Robbins Landon's authoritative five-volume biography of Haydn, the publication of which was completed in 1980, is likely to remain the principal source of information on the composer for years to come. The present study offers what is essentially a digest of some of the most important documents contained in that work (among them the famous contract of 1761 between Haydn and the Esterházy family, the autobiographical sketch of 1776, and a selection of contemporary reviews of the London concerts Haydn gave during the early 1790s), as well as a considerable amount of new pictorial material and a useful appendix in the shape of a chronology of works and related events in Haydn's life. Of particular value is a supplementary section containing examples of autograph scores spanning the composer's entire career, from an early G major keyboard sonata to the minute from the unfinished D minor string quartet of 1803 - his last instrumental work (it was to this quartet torso that Haydn instructed his publisher to append his visiting-card, which bore a musical setting of the words, "Hilf mir alle meine Kraft, alt und schwach bin ich, - 'Gott ist all my strength, old and weak am I'").

A volume of such limited scope clearly could not be expected to contain any detailed discussion of the music itself. Nevertheless, the reader largely unfamiliar with Haydn's work might well gain a somewhat unbalanced view of his output. In the autobiographical sketch to which reference has already been made, Haydn placed considerable emphasis on his operas; Robbins Landon does the same, to the extent of declaring that the operas of 1766 - 85 are "more interesting than the rest of his output of his contemporary instrumental productions". Quite some handful, when one considers that the years in question saw the composition of the first dozen masterpieces in the history of the string quartet (Op 20 and 33), an even greater number of symphonies (including such passionate minor-mode works as the "Trauer", No 44, the "Farewell", No 45, and "La Passione", No 49); as well as some of Haydn's finest middle-period piano sonatas and trios.

The beginning of this period, in fact, marks what was perhaps the most violent stylistic upheaval of Haydn's life - one that transformed him more or less overnight from a highly competent composer of little individuality into a creative genius. Yet such an explosive event merits no more than three sentences in the book's introduction; nor is reference made at any stage to the Op 33 quartets of 1781; which were to establish the textural model for string quartet writing for a hundred years to come. (The composer's claim that the quartets were written "in a new and special manner", often dismissed as mere sales-talk, deserves to be taken seriously.) The works of Haydn's late London and Viennese years receive more generous attention, though one is surprised to find the great series of Masses - those final manifestations of Haydn's symphonic vocal style - described as "basically... lasting tributes to Haydn's belief in the order of the

universe and the omnipresent and beneficent influence of God's goodness". The plea seems more easily forgiven than the no doubt unintentional belittling of the works' towering musical achievement.

As far as the book's documentary aspect is concerned, only occasionally is attractive speculation allowed to get the better of solid scholarship: the bald statement that as a boy chorister Haydn participated in the Requiem Mass held for Vivaldi, who died in Vienna in 1741, needs to be treated with some caution; and the additional remark to the effect that the occasion represented Haydn's first experience of a composer who died poor and forgotten reaches the realm of the metaphorical. For the most part, this distillation of Robbins Landon's many years of invaluable research presents a fascinating picture of the circumstances which gave rise to some of the world's greatest music. What would one not have given to have been present at that quiet party described by Michael Kelly (the Irish tenor who took part in the first performance of *Le Nozze di Figaro*) at which Haydn played the first violin. Dittersdorf the second, Mozart the viola, and Vanhal the cello; or the dinner enjoyed in December 1790 by Solomon, Mozart and Haydn, at which the violinist-impresario arranged for Mozart to "come to London on the same terms that he was then offering to Haydn (including, one presumes, the writing of a dozen new symphonies)? Had Mozart not died the following year, had Haydn - as was at one stage his firm intention - brought his young pupil Beethoven with him on his second voyage, in 1794, then London would have played host to all three masters in the final decade of the eighteenth century.

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A neglected songbook

By Filippo Donini

UMBERTO SABA:
Il Canzoniere, 1921
Edited by Giordano Castellani
cxvii + 572pp. Milan: Mondadori.
L. 40,000.

Giordano Castellani complains in his foreword that in studies of Italian poetic language in this century, Umberto Saba has been neglected, and he sees the cause of this neglect as lying "mainly" in the "unreliable" quality of the final, authorized edition (1945) of Saba's *Canzoniere*. Whether this is true is debatable: possibly the neglect comes "mainly" from the fact that other poets, such as Ungaretti and Montale, have been found more attractive, and the study of their language more rewarding, as being more pertinent to the development of contemporary Italian poetry. But in any case Giordano Castellani has done well to re-establish the original text of the *Canzoniere* as it was published in 1921, and to edit it with an impeccable critical apparatus, an excellent introduction and some ninety pages of closely printed notes which throw much light on both the poet's biography and the genesis, meaning and value of the individual poems.

The differences between the original *Canzoniere* and the 1945 edition are considerable: suffice it to say that the number of lines was halved between 1921 and 1945. Of course the question arises whether one is entitled to resuscitate what the author himself rejected, but Italian literature is so lacking in illustrious precedent. Few people now read Tasso's *Gerusalemme conquistata*, yet the poet wanted it to supersede the infinitely better *Gerusalemme liberata*. In the case of Saba, there is no doubt that the 1921 edition contained not a few immature and

unsuccessful poems "which it would have been better to throw into the dustbin", in Saba's own judgment, but others which he rejected are certainly not without merit, and some that he revised are better in their earlier form. In any case, in order to make a choice, both critic and reader would need to compare the first with the second edition, but very few copies of the *Canzoniere* of 1921 exist in libraries, so that the present edition fills a lamentable gap.

Castellani, moreover, has been able to check the 1921 edition against Saba's MS of two years earlier, and so to add another interesting set of variants to the already formidable collection. He is the first scholar to have consulted this MS, which has led an adventurous life: Saba gave it as a present to his uncle Giuseppe Fano, a Jew like Saba's mother, and it was stolen by the German SS when they ransacked Fano's house, but it turned up mysteriously in an antiquarian bookshop and was bought in 1975 by the Trieste Municipal Library.

The process of revision to which Saba submitted his poems was so complicated, so unending and at times so contradictory that it has been taken as the symptom of a deep neurosis in the poet. Poems conceived and first written in the early years of this century were altered for the 1911 edition of his *Poesie*, revised and shortened or extended in the 1919 MS of the *Canzoniere*, but altered again for publication in 1921. Then a hurricane of alterations, suppressions and additions gave the 1945 *Canzoniere* an entirely different aspect: it was this edition that Saba proclaimed definitive. In support of this decision, he wrote his *Storia e cronistoria del Canzoniere*, an unfortunate document of self-justification, verging at times on self-glorification, with many of whose judgments even Castellani, who certainly does not lack understanding and admiration for Saba, finds himself at variance.

Castellani's diligence and acumen in preparing the present edition are unquestionable, and deserve much praise and gratitude from all lovers of Italian poetry. His insight into Saba's first literary inclinations and musical tendencies (how revealing that his first pseudonym was Umberto *Chopin* Politi); his study of the influence of D'Annunzio and Carducci on the young poet; his appreciation of the war poems, among which there are a few to be ranked with the best of Ungaretti; his analysis and interpretation of some of the love poems, and identification of the low recipients or inspirations; his mapping of the places in Trieste so often discernible in Saba will prove very helpful to future scholars.

Only rarely is one tempted to argue with Castellani, as for instance when he says that the title *Canzoniere* "has probably nothing to do with Petrarch", or when he exaggerates in tracing to literary sources certain expressions that may have come to Saba quite naturally from the everyday language. Some obvious derivations, on the other hand, escape him, but these are minor flaws.

Since Castellani complains that his poet has been neglected, the question arises whether his own monumental piece of philology can lead to any aesthetic reevaluation of his work. On this I am very doubtful. To have more of Saba does not necessarily make him more likeable. He is the author of a few excellent, indeed perfect poems, and it is better to concentrate on these rather than to be exposed to his many imperfect ones, with their awful inversions, their repetitive verbosity, their cheap sentimentality. The cause of Saba's popularity is therefore better served by a good anthology, like the one published by C. Muscetta in 1975, than by the present complete edition.

Unorthodox Dante

By Zygmunt G. Barański

MARIA CORTI:
Dante a un nuovo crocevia
112pp. Florence: Sansoni.

In his magisterial studies of Dante, Gianfranco Contini has evolved a coherent perspective both on the critical fascination which the poet's work stimulates, and on the unique intellectual and artistic genius which fashioned it. Contini has suggested that a "polysemous" reading of the verbal resources of Dante's oeuvre can afford an insight into the complex and singularity of his compositional practices – by *polysemous* he means a particular synthesis, transformation, and cross-fertilization in Dante's own use of heterogeneous elements drawn from his wide reading. The resulting diversity of allusion causes Dante's text to overflow with meaning, since it contains a whole sea of cultural and textual reminiscences, all of which have a function in the overall organization. Such a view of the poet encourages the hope that important discoveries may still be made concerning Dante's sources, and thus his intellectual formation.

Maria Corti, thanks to her remarkable knowledge of medieval culture, has made such a discovery. She argues that Dante knew the works of the thirteenth-century Averroists, or rather, Radical Aristotelians, which we are told is a more accurate label, and in particular that he knew certain of the writings of Siger of Brabant and Boethius the Dane, the leaders of this Paris-based group of intellectuals. Furthermore, in an analysis of the *De vulgari eloquentia*, she integrates these discoveries with hitherto unnoticed elements from the writings of the Victorine mystics and those of the legal glossators. However, while the verbal correspondences she points out are normally convincing, the "system" (to remain faithful to Contini's terminology) Professor Corti creates out of them in order to interpret the *De vulgari eloquentia* and three episodes from the *Comedy* are at times too rigid; particularly in her analysis of the treatise, she seems too intent on forcing the pre-*Comedy* Dante into the ranks of the Radical Aristotelians, or at the very least on presenting him as one of their fellow-travellers. Corti thus appears not to abide by Contini's warning that critics must avoid "imposing" Dante in any one system, since the poet's words constitute the starting-point for many such patterns of connections, which the scholar must highlight, though with a "lightness" of touch.

Unlike certain Dantists, I am not at all disturbed by this association of Dante with unorthodoxy. The picture of the poet as a model Thomist and champion of Catholic conformity is a facile and unsatisfactory one. In fact, this possible knowledge and use of the writings of the Averroists have been hinted at before, although the credit for having documented this knowledge more fully and systematically belongs to Professor Corti alone. An intellectually open-minded Dante, especially in the decade or so after his exile's death, is consistent with the poet's biography as we know it from other sources, with the general directions of the *Convivio*, and with his poetic repudiation of the Earthly Paradise for having strayed from the lessons embodied in Beatrice in order to pursue other ladies: the "serene" and the "pargoletta" / o altra novità con a breve uso". Furthermore, such a free-thinking Dante would neatly complement that Dante whose originality and bold independence has not been questioned; namely, the one who turned the rhetorical tradition on its head by his stylistic and structural experiments, and who so dramatically developed the Italian literary vernacular.

Dante a un nuovo crocevia opens very promisingly. The last of its three chapters argues excellently the case for Dante's possible access to

the speculations of the Radical Aristotelians. Corti shows beyond any doubt that a group of such thinkers existed in Bologna at the end of the thirteenth century and that they were in close contact with the Florentine *stilnovisti* poets. This is an important conclusion, because, besides its implications for the book's central thesis, it reconfirms the philosophical basis of the poetry of the *stilnovisti*, a fact which has been called in question in recent years. In particular, Corti hints repeatedly at the adherence of Cavalcanti to this speculative philosophy – a subject which will expand in a forthcoming study. In view of our existing knowledge about Cavalcanti, a close association on his part with this tradition appears not at all unlikely. Thus, Corti shows when she discusses *Il ferno* X in her third chapter, it is precisely Cavalcanti's firm adoption of the tenets of Radical Aristotelianism that causes the rift between him and Dante.

From such stimulating beginnings, *Dante a un nuovo crocevia* moves into its most dubious section, the second chapter, where Corti argues that Dante's views on language in the *De vulgari eloquentia* frequently correspond to the views of the Radical Aristotelians on universal language. In particular, Corti takes Dante's *Modi significandi* as put forward as one of the treatise's principal sources. Corti's thesis concerning the exact extent of this influence ultimately hinges on reading the phrases "inventores grammaticae locuti" (I x li) and "grammaticae locuti" (I x li) as referring, respectively, to speculative grammarians (philosophers) and positive grammarians, rather than as synonymous. This "grammaticae", at least in the first case, is taken to mean universal grammar and not Latin or artificial and conventional grammar. A brief glance at the notes to Mengaldo's edition of the *De vulgari eloquentia* reveals the contentious nature of Corti's claim, since Dante's likely knowledge of several other grammatical-theoretical traditions using an identical terminology (traditions which she almost completely disregards) militates against her conclusions in both instances. Furthermore, these traditions are much closer to Dante's own definition of the kind of language with which he associates the "inventores grammaticae locuti", which he unambiguously asserts to be man-made ("this [language], since it was regulated by the common consent of many peoples..."), and so the opposite of the absolutes of the speculative grammarians.

On the other hand, although I find it very unlikely that Boethius's *Modi significandi* "offered him [Dante] the theoretical grid for Book I of the *De vulgari eloquentia*" (p. 36), I am sure that in other cases, for example Dante's presentation of the *vulgare illustre*, which is his attempt at creating a "universal" language for Italy out of the structures of natural language, it is quite likely that occasionally (but only occasionally) the poet might echo in his work phrases or ideas from the Radical Aristotelians. Although the treatise does have an important philosophical substratum, its general direction is the whole far from the abstractness of the philosophers. It is a practical work closely tied to contemporary realities, and thus moving in that direction, as Boethius would have suggested, use Boethius's words a programmatic fashion, but in a much more marginal and tentative way, which is consistent with his customary artistic and intellectual processes as so admirably clarified by Contini.

This elegantly written book leaves too many questions unanswered and too many obvious objections ignored. Only when Professor Corti's work on the *De vulgari eloquentia* is properly integrated with the existing work of earlier scholars will the extent of Dante's borrowing from the Radical Aristotelians, and its effects on the treatise become fully apparent.

The epoch of the 'colonial party'

By Albert Hourani

CHRISTOPHER M. ANDREW and
A. S. KANYA-FORSTNER:
France Overseas
The Great War and the Climax of
French Imperial Expansion
302pp. Thames and Hudson. £12.
0 500 25075 8

"All that interests the French public about the Empire is the belly dance." This was Jules Ferry's verdict on his own efforts, as Prime Minister in the 1880s, to arouse a wider concern. For the most part, Frenchmen did not catch the imperial fever at the time when it was sweeping England. Apart from the silk manufacturers of Lyons, French capitalists and merchants had a limited interest in the colonies, which accounted for only ten per cent of France's foreign trade and only nine per cent of its foreign investment by 1914. On the whole, colonial service did not attract the best officials, and imperial questions could not hold the attention or serve the ambitions of most politicians. When in August 1914 Doumergue agreed to leave the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for that of the Colonies, the President, Poincaré, was so moved by his sacrifice that he could not refrain from embracing him. Imperial questions took up little time at Cabinet meetings; the Cabinet was not told of the Anglo-French discussions in 1904, which were to end in the Entente Cordiale, until they had been going on for several months, and the Fiez expedition of 1911, which led to the protectorate over Morocco, was decided upon by three ministers while the rest were on holiday.

If this lack of interest made it difficult for governments to form a clear imperial policy and carry it out, it made it easier for a small group of men who knew what they wanted to impose their will on the government when circumstances favoured them. In this, the carefully researched and clearly written book, Christopher Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forstner show how the small group and the favourable circumstances came together during and after the First World War. The colonial pressure groups which emerged in the 1890s were small and divided, but had the support of a few politicians – Delcassé, Pichon – and some important officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They were moved not so much by the thought of the economic advantages of empire as by a certain idea of France: "to extend the space occupied by our civilization" in the Mediterranean basin and its southern extension in Africa, and to reassert the position of France as a great power after the defeat of 1870-71. (An echo of this could be heard as late as 1957, when François Mitterrand said that "without Africa, France will have no history in the twenty-first century".)

The opportunity to exercise influence came in the years before the war, when it became possible to present colonial questions as questions of national prestige: those who did not care about a piece of land in Asia or Africa for its own sake could be moved by the argument that it should not be allowed to fall into British or German hands. When war broke out, the scope for action grew wider. In many ways it was still limited. The heart of France was turned towards the Western Front; troops could not be spared for Asian or African campaigns, and successive governments were neither much concerned with colonial questions nor well informed about them. As Minister of Foreign Affairs, Delcassé told his colleagues little about the negotiations with Britain and Russia over Constantinople in 1915, and they remained uncertain what they had in fact agreed to. Briand, acting for Foreign Affairs, was lazy, ignorant and confused, and by the end of 1916 his government had still not decided what its war aims were. Clemenceau was reluctant to tell anyone what he was doing: "I shall have claims to make," he declared, addressing the Chamber before the Peace Conference began, "but I am not going to tell you what they are." At about the same time he failed to tell the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that he had given up French claims to Palestine and

Mosul in a private talk with Lloyd George.

In spite of because of this lack of interest at the highest level, however, the "colonial party" was able to wield greater influence than ever before, and it could make use of the defensive patriotism evoked by the war. Some of its members were in important positions: Pichon was Minister of Foreign Affairs in Clemenceau's government, Leygues was chairman of the foreign affairs commission of the Chamber, Flandin an influential member of the Senate. Others were in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is one of the merits of this book that it shows how policy was made by a very small number of officials and gives life to those who have been little more than names: Robert de Caix and François Georges-Picot were relatively junior officials who were able to exercise great influence.

In Africa the colonial party was on the whole successful. The lack of manpower and of sustained support by the government was counter-balanced by British concern to preserve the alliance, and France obtained the mandate over Togo and the Cameroons with virtually complete freedom of action, and an end to the restrictions on her freedom of action in Morocco which had been imposed at the insistence of Germany. The main attention of the colonial party, however, was not turned to Africa but to Syria. Even a few of its members were certain that positive advantage France could gain from being there, to leave it all to Britain was unthinkable. On the whole, they would have preferred Syria to remain part of an Ottoman Empire permeated by French influence, but if the Empire was to be broken up they wanted "la Syrie intégrale", including Palestine and Lebanon, for France.

They did not achieve all they wanted. Palestine fell into British hands; they would have preferred Lebanon to be joined to Syria in a loose

federation, but in the event the government created a separate and enlarged Lebanon, in deference to Lebanese opinion, or at least the strand of Lebanese opinion which it needed to take into account. Something was gained: French rule was established in Damascus, and the frontier between French and British spheres of rule was more favourable than the British at first had been willing to concede. This happened, however, in a way which made it seem more like a defeat than a victory: in the face of what appeared to Frenchmen like an Anglo-Arab alliance to deprive them of their rights, and by an act of force which made it impossible for France to obtain even such legitimacy for her rule as the British acquired in Iraq, by agreement with an indigenous government resting on a certain, even if limited, common interest.

The colonialists were victims of that typical illusion of the imperial age, the belief that the Syrians were longing for France to rule them, but they were never able to produce a credible pro-French Syrian party: when asked to address the Peace Conference, their protégé, Shukri Ghannim, a Franco-phonic poet who had not visited his country for thirty years, talked for two-and-a-half hours without stopping and bored his hearers to distraction. In the same way, they were unable to make allies of the Zionists. When the British and French governments decided, in the Sykes-Picot agreement, that Palestine should be under international control, both regarded it as no more than a temporary agreement, and each tried at once to put itself in a position to change it, the British by making their deal with the Zionists, the French by reaching an agreement with Russia. In the Franco-Russian exchange of notes of April 26, 1916, Russia promised to support French claims, but the Russian revolution ended French hopes when they tried to induce the Zionists to support their claims; they succeeded only in giving an endorsement to the Zionist

aims without getting anything in return.

In the main, the difficulties which the French met with spring from their weakness in the Near East compared with the British. They found themselves lured, in that part of Syria where Britain had agreed that they should have paramount influence, with an Arab regime, that of Faysal, suspicious of their intentions, and having support from local British officials, and to some extent from the government in London. Their policy was first of all to reach agreement with Britain, then try to rule Syria through an acquiescent Faysal. In the complicated negotiations which followed, there were moments when agreement seemed possible, but the gap was too wide: France insisted on military occupation of Damascus and Aleppo, and the Syrian government would not concede this, both because of pressure of public opinion and because it could hope for some degree of support from Britain, which still had military control of the country, and also from the United States.

Then in 1920 the situation changed in two ways. At a time when its imperial defences were overstretched, Britain decided to withdraw its troops from Syria and hand control to the Syrians, which meant in effect to leave them face to face with the French. In France, Clemenceau's government was replaced by one more committed to imperial expansion. Even so, it would still have preferred to make an agreement with Faysal, and its man on the spot, General Gouraud, was also hesitant about a policy of force; but matters were brought to a head by the only people who knew their minds clearly, de Caix and those who thought like him in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: an ultimatum was sent to Faysal, he finally accepted it, his acceptance was ignored, and France installed herself in Syria.

These events have been seen hitherto mainly from a British or an Arab

point of view. French policy and the justifications of it have gone largely by default, and this book does a service by filling the gap – or rather the larger part of it. Naturally and correctly, it sees the process as it appeared from Paris, but it ignores the activities of French officials and military men in the Near East itself, although France could contribute no more than a token force for the eastern campaigns, her representatives were active, and the well-informed and perspicacious reports of men like Brémond and de Saint-Quentin might have to be taken into account for a full assessment of the way in which French policy was formed. On matters Middle Eastern the authors are generally accurate, although an unfortunate wording on page 221 might leave the reader with the impression that the Anglo-French frontier agreement placed Banias within Palestine.

Their views of British policy are on the whole sensible and fair. Their explanation of the reasons for British support of Zionism is correct, although they do not refer to Dr. Vered's important article, "The Balfour Declaration and its makers", so is their judgment on the ambiguities in the McMahon letters, and the difficulty of reconciling their spirit with the Sykes-Picot agreement. They are on less sure ground, however, when they try to explain the letters as a product of the initiative of British officials in Cairo, with Sir Edward Grey and the Foreign Office giving in to pressure against their inner judgment; if there was an "Egyptian party" among British officials, it could not act with the same independence as the "Syrian party" in Paris. Again, when they look forward to the final confrontation of Britain and France in Syria, during the Second World War, they rely too much on the French version of what happened. It is too simple to describe "Churchill's policy" as being to incorporate Syria in a British-dominated Middle Eastern Arab federation, or to explain the tangled events of 1945 as a French attempt, justified by the British, to "suppress a Syrian insurrection".

Happily ever before

By Patrick McCarthy

WALTER VELTRONI:
Il Sogno degli anni '60
240pp. Milan: Savelli. L. 7,000.

In *Il Sogno degli anni '60* Walter Veltroni has collected the reminiscences of forty-six prominent Italians who were marked by the 1960s. They include the socialist politician Claudio Martelli, the singer Francesco Guccini, the actor Alberto Sordi and the soccer international Gigi Riva. One might argue with the selection both because there are too few women and too many left-wingers and because Veltroni has concentrated on the age-group that was twenty years old around 1960. People who had lived through Fascism and the Second World War would surely have offered different insights into the period. Yet these short, rapid pieces, some written and some typed, enable us to relive both the great events – Togliatti's funeral or the Florence floods – and the trivia of the decade.

The general theme is expressed by Alberto Sordi: "Today our lives are grey and full of fear. Fear is an integral part of being an Italian. The sixties were different, lots of new things happened, they were exciting years". One must remember that Italians love to lament about their country but it is true that the 1970s, when the lira plummeted and terrorism was rampant, did not realize the hopes of the previous decade.

The early Sixties were a time when the Italians had never had it so good. Industrialization had come late but now exports were booming, and people were flocking from the countryside to Milan and Rome. Italy was flooded with consumer goods, and the symbol of this prosperity was the

Fiat 500, which was the first car that working-class people could afford. Television antennae sprouted on millions of roofs as Italians settled down to watch hours of TV quizzes and games (Italy has the dubious distinction of having invented "It's a Knockout"). Of course there were still calamities. In the 1966 World Cup Italy was beaten by North Korea and, as Riva and his teammates flew home, thousands of enraged supporters were gathering at Genoa airport to lynch them. But, in general, doubts about Italy's future were drowned under waves of rock'n'roll or buried beneath mountains of refrigerators and washing-machines.

Liberation accompanied prosperity. Vatican Two had special meaning for the Italians because Pope John XXIII fostered political as well as liturgical change. In 1964 the centre-left coalition of Aldo Moro and Pietro Nenni offered a programme of social reform and seemed to end the acid dispute between the Catholic left and the left. Further to the left, there were strikes and university protests which foreshadowed the 1968 explosion.

As one reads *Il Sogno*, however, one feels that the demand for change was strongest not in the political but in the sexual domain. Veltroni's contributors complain, bitterly, about their frustrated youth and about the puritanism of Italian society. It seems normal that Catholics should be puritans but one is surprised to discover that the Communists sought to emulate them. The young Enrico Berlinguer, then secretary of the Communist Youth Federation, made long speeches exhorting Communist girls to preserve their virginity. Lustful young men had to wait until the summer, which was already bringing swarms of German and Swedish girls to the Adriatic beaches. Transsexual sex was not, so it seems, sinful.

Foreign influences of all kinds

were welcomed. Britain was nobly represented by the Beatles and James Bond, France by Sartre and Silvia Vartan. Even more important was the presence of the United States. John Kennedy personified modern, progressive leadership. Bob Dylan's songs were strummed on thousands of Italian guitars and later the militants of 1968 admired the Berkeley free-speech movement and joined in the anti-Vietnam crusade.

Several of Veltroni's contributors describe how the myth of America crumbled during the 1970s. Nixon and Watergate killed it, and Carter failed to resurrect it. The US has ceased to fascinate young Italians and indeed one doubts whether European youth in general still looks across the Atlantic for models of behaviour. The assassinations of the two Kennedys were lived in Italy as personal and national tragedies; no American figure is as admired today.

Meanwhile the promise of the Italian Sixties was crumbling too. The centre-left coalition broke up; the Christian Democrats went on to rule for another decade while the socialists were thrust into a wilderness from which they are only now being pulled. When the 1968 protest failed to turn into a revolution a few disappointed militants like Renato Curcio and Alberto Franceschini resorted to violence and founded the Red Brigades. The Italian economy had not recovered from the 1968 disturbances when the oil boycott of 1973 brought soaring inflation. It may be too simple to interpret recent Italian history as a cycle of hope and disillusionment but this is how many Italians perceive it. Francesco Guccini, whose songs are full of nostalgia for the Bologna of the Sixties, tells us that twenty years ago people felt less fear and worried less about the economy. "We all lived happily together in Bologna", he concludes.

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Enemy of the people

By Kyril FitzLyon

NIKOLAI TOLSTOY:
Stalin's Secret War
463pp. Cape. £9.50.
0 224 01665 2

After his success with *Victims of Yalta* Nikolai Tolstoy could appropriately have called the present book "Victims of Stalin", for that is what *Stalin's Secret War* is about. The theme is not limited to Stalin's "second front", which was directed against the population of his own country in the name of security during and in parallel with the war against the Germans, even though the number of casualties in that terrifying internal campaign was fully comparable with the number of casualties suffered in battle with the foreign invader and considerably more people were imprisoned by the régime than were captured by the Germans. The author makes the point, moreover, that many of the millions officially stated to have died at the hands of the Germans would have survived if the Soviet authorities had used more civilized methods of warfare: if they had not, for instance, adopted the method of clearing minefields by forcing men through them, or if they had signed the Geneva Convention and insisted on Soviet prisoners of war being treated in accordance with it.

Tolstoy's aim, however, is more ambitious. Gathering together the multiple strands of Stalin's private life, Soviet diplomacy, military history, government-sponsored terror and the gulag system of concentration camps, he sets out to show how the system which still threatens the Western world: the "3 a.m. knock at the door can come as easily in Washington as in Warsaw".

In Warsaw, of course, it came first as a result of the Hitler-Stalin Pact

of 1939 and the consequent partition of Poland, followed by the Soviet invasion of the Baltic States. Here, remarks Tolstoy, comparing Stalin's USSR to Mussolini's Italy, the Soviet Union played the role of Jackal to Germany's lion. The Pact itself Tolstoy views as the natural culmination of Soviet-German relations, perhaps from the early 1920s onwards and certainly after 1929, when Stalin assumed power. In 1933, Stalin assumed the British Ambassador that "these relations were not based on transient circumstances, but on the basic national interests of both countries". No Soviet government has ever felt this about other Western powers, and at no time, remarks Tolstoy, did the Soviet attitude to the Allies become as cooperative as it was to Nazi Germany, even when the Soviet Union most needed Allied help. So sure was Stalin of Hitler's friendship that he not only disregarded the "miserable warnings" he was given of Hitler's true intentions, but even refused to believe that the invasion had begun: reports of German troop movements and bombing attacks were at first discounted or attributed to the feared imagination of local commanders. A message from a bewildered officer: "We are under fire. What are we to do?", received the terse answer: "You must be unwell".

The reply to a similar inquiry from Marshal Malinovsky was: "Do not open fire". The reason for this blind and uncharacteristic trust has never been satisfactorily established. Tolstoy makes the interesting, though necessarily tentative, suggestion that on the very eve of the invasion Stalin may have received Hitler's personal assurances of friendship, together with a warning of a German military conspiracy "to provoke a conflict against the Führer's wishes". A suspicion on Stalin's part that his own generals might turn against him in the event, they were not already involved, would, Tolstoy thinks, explain both the drastic purge

of Soviet army officers at the time and Stalin's insistence that the reported German attack was a provocation.

Moreover, Stalin's fears were not confined to the military; they spread to the nation as a whole. He suspected, says Tolstoy, "that Soviet Russia was a house of cards, held together only by the bonds of the NKVD", and therefore took precautions to strengthen these bonds even at the cost of the war effort against the external enemy, whom he feared less than his own people. This led to the curious situation of an appeal to Churchill "for twenty-five or thirty divisions to be sent to fight on the Russian front" (author's emphasis), at the same time that a vast army (Tolstoy suggests a million or double the peace-time establishment) was kept immobilized as concentration camp guards. In addition, of course, there were the troops, together with their arms, transport and associated personnel, at the service of the security system. It was fear, too – fear of Polish resistance and fear, perhaps, of a possible subversive use by the Allies (prior to the German invasion) of Polish captives in the Soviet Union – that, in Tolstoy's view, may explain the massacre of 14,000 Polish officers in Katyn and elsewhere in Russia.

One chapter in this book may arouse particular interest. On the face of it, it merely repeats the story told in *Victims of Yalta* of the surrender of the Cassino and White Russian refugees to the Soviet authorities. But there is greater emphasis on Macmillan's alleged responsibility, with even stronger suggestions of pressures brought to bear on him and on Eden by a communist-ridden Foreign Office. As presented here, it is a tale of suppressed documents, missing letters, misdeeds, reports, and in 1942: the Greek lead, higher authority, at the end of the book, the establishment of an independent Greek state.

and well argued. The case for the defence must wait until further evidence is available or the personalities involved – those of them who are still alive – offer explanations they have so far refused to give.

The book is well researched, but unfortunately it has no bibliography, and perhaps too many secondary sources are used where primary sources are easily accessible. It is certainly convincing on the subject of Soviet inefficiency, nervousness and unwillingness to commit the country to war with a great power until pushed into it by direct attack. And, by the same token, it surely argues against the credibility of the Soviet Union's threat to the Western alliance as a potential aggressor. This, however, does not seem to have been the author's intention.

Balkan Society in the Age of Greek Independence. (253pp. Macmillan. £15. 0 333 31580 4). edited by Richard Clogg, comprises a collection of papers originally delivered at a symposium organized in 1977 by the Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at King's College, London, to mark the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Navarino. Navarino, the last great battle of the age of sail, assured Greek independence, the Turco-Egyptian fleet being destroyed by a combined British, Russian and French force. The symposium considered nineteenth-century Greek society within the Balkan context and made a comparative analysis of Serbian, Montenegrin, Rumanian, Bulgarian and Greek society. The beginning of the nineteenth century was of particular significance in the history of the Balkan peoples. The Serbs achieved a form of autonomy within the Ottoman Empire in 1815. Rumanian and Bulgarian nationalist sentiment grew rapidly, and in 1821 the Greek lead, higher authority, at the end of the book, the establishment of an independent Greek state.

The suffering objects of desire

By Tim Dooley

D. M. THOMAS:
Dreaming in Bronze
71pp. Secker and Warburg. £4.50.
0 436 51891 0

In a review of D.M. Thomas's last volume of poems, *The Honeycomb Voyage*, John Cotton came to the prescient conclusion that what gave unity to the rather disparate thematic and stylistic concerns of Thomas's work was a consummate narrative gift. Since the publication of *The Honeycomb Voyage* in 1978, Thomas has received considerable attention as the author of three highly original novels: *The Flute Player*, *Birchstone*, and *The White Hotel*. His new collection of poetry, *Dreaming in Bronze*, is likely, therefore, to be read in the light of his fiction rather than his earlier collections of poems, all of which are now out of print.

Thomas's earlier collections — a group of science fiction poems in *Penguin Modern Poets 1*, then *Two Voices*, *Logan Stone*, *The Shaft*, *Love and Other Deaths* — were competent but unexciting examples of experimental writing. It is probably his translations of Anna Akhmatova that have given his work the greater seriousness and formal control noticeable from *The Honeycomb Voyage* onwards. *The Flute Player* paid specific tribute to Akhmatova and her remarkable generation, examining the ways in which creatively survived the cruelties of a totalitarian regime. An account of the massacre at Babi Yar is central to *The White Hotel*, and in *Dreaming in Bronze* Thomas again presents us with examples of poemless suffering on a massive scale, concentrating on individual victims like the gypsies murdered at Auschwitz and Treblinka ("Translation of a Lost Gypsy Song") or a young Japanese girl dying slowly from the effects of nuclear fallout ("Sadako Sasaki").

"Sun Valley", a poem whose ostensible subject is mechanized poultry farming, allows Thomas to suggest that our inability to frame an appropriate response to Hiroshima or the German and Soviet death camps might represent a horror as great as the events themselves:

How weak are words, and how unfit to frame
my concept — which lags after what was shown
so far, it flutters it to call it lame!
And it might be ten thousand fowl or one
went smoothly past the imperceptible
electric impulse where they had begun
their afterlife, wings fluttering the white;
and even after they had been thrust
through
the cutter, headless they were fluttering
still.
But swiftly after that their power to move
compassion vanished — as when, journeying
far down through Inferno, one's own power
to love
vanishes like the sun and the other stars.

Thomas's careful mimicry of Dante's tone and form makes the capitalized "Inferno" nearly superfluous. It also emphasizes how far he has moved from the rather arbitrary use of form that marked his earlier work. One implication of this poem — that the availability of temporal visions of Hell makes the theology underpinning Dante's own vision redundant — is underlined by his version of a poem by the medieval Armenian writer, Prk. In "Protect", a "Just and truthful God" is arraigned for his crimes against mankind, and is asked:

Do you envy us our courage, patient endurance,
passion for the unattainable:
qualities you cannot possess?

Calm endurance, the imagination's victory over experience, is for Thomas an important element in coming to terms with the idea of suffering. Elena, in *The Flute Player*, comes to see the values for which she is prepared to endure suffering so calmly, not "as a saint and pious book" but "as a private delight rather than, more certainly, which helps her survive, and

Thomas suggests that it is through private preferences, however quirky and obscure they may seem, that we are able to recognize that individuality in others which inspires imaginative sympathy and love.

It is to be expected that, as an admirer of Freud, Thomas should see a conflict between *Eros* and *Thanatos*, between the pleasure principle and the death wish, as lying at the heart of the problem. The obsessive exploration of sexual themes in Thomas's writing connects here with his moral concerns. In expressing sexual preference or asserting "our individuality or ability to smile in our own life", paradoxically, however, the sexual instinct's independence of rational and conscious control reminds us of the limitations on our freedom and dignity. The case of Peter Kurten, the sexually-motivated murderer guillotined in Düsseldorf in 1931, and that of Freud's patient the Wolf-Man, are recalled both in *The White Hotel* and in *Dreaming in Bronze*. The depersonalizing aspect of sexual compulsion that one sees in these examples has striking affinities with the dehumanization associated with institutionalized cruelty. A similar depersonalization occurs in sexual fetishism, where partial objects (such as the oft-pervasive suspender-belts and stockings in Thomas's writing) take the place of human relationships as the end of desire, Thomas, who

elsewhere is so humane a writer, seems to me morally obtuse in the way in which, as part of his treatment of sexual drives, he assumes that an understanding relationship with another person must be of less importance than the fulfillment of private fantasies.

Dreaming in Bronze opens with two poems whose literary-historical settings suggest that respect for a sexual partner as a person is a hindrance to the pleasures of love. In "The Stone Clasp", Don Juan rejects the love of the virtuous and forgiving Donna Anna, sensing that to act out of the respect he feels towards her would be to deny his carnal, amoral nature. In "Farewell, My Life; I Love You", Pushkin's love for his wife Natalia is dependent on her willingness "to be lost in love tonight and sacrificed".

Beneath the absolute beauty of your surfaces
there is nothing, nothing, Natalia. That is why
I love you. To love you is to learn to skate.

In "Two Women, Made by the Selfsame Hand", one of the most accomplished and resonant poems in this collection, Thomas examines the way in which archetypal images of women affect individual relationships. The speaker and his partner are haunted during a rainy holiday by two terracotta statuettes which exemplify

the opposing images of ecstatic and abundant femininity said to be typical of ancient "matriarchal" civilizations:

a girl with briny locks and changeling gaze,
the left hand open on her thigh,
late-adolescent undine perching on a rock — and her soulful primitive
madonna, tall and standing, gazing down
with all the fear that perfect love can give.

The speaker purchases the first of these figures, but his partner rejects both as incomplete: "the nurturing madonna without sex, / the lonely mistress without motherhood . . . to the puzzlement of the man in the poem who interprets her anger as sexual rejection."

The rejection in Thomas's poems, however, is more typically the other way around. The female speaker in "The Lady of Fetters", who demands to be seen as a person rather than a source of sexual power, is insulted and galled. In "Ani", a reworking of a Tz'utzu myth, the parts of a woman's body which will fit neither the abundant nor the ecstatic stereotype are explicitly rejected as worthless. Elsewhere, the sexual organs and the sexual act itself become symbols of revulsion: female public hair is reminiscent of a tarantula and a banana spider; the vagina is referred to as a "gash". In the sequence "Big Deaths, Little Deaths", sex becomes an expression of bewildered anger, a

violent revenge for the death of a loved one.

In other poems, such as the debaucher's "Blizzard", the rhetoric of subjugation and transcendence, the opposition to individuality and the different, more mystical, quality of these poems, as in the mystic's Palestinian transit camp which is the setting for the code of *The White Hotel*, Thomas evokes a place of the pain of suffering. "It is a child's pool, utterly clear", he tells us in "The Clearing". It is also a Promised Land where the separations of death are annulled and the subject is aware: "I am being cared for by someone who clearly loves me." "The House of Dreams", Thomas tells us in his poem of that title (which, though it is forward to the themes of *The White Hotel* "is something about home everyone"). Yet he uses as epigraph to *The White Hotel* the following line from Yeats:

We had heard the heart on fantasies,
The heart's grown brutal from the fact.

In this collection, as in his recent novels, it is Thomas's achievement to give us a clear if uncomfortable picture of both the loving and the brutalizing fantasies on which our hearts continue to feed.

Partial glimpses of the flame

By Steve Ellis

JOHN MOLE:
Feeding the Lake
58pp. Secker and Warburg. £4.50.
0 436 28040 X

TANER BAYBARS:
Pregnant Shadows
44pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £3.50.
0 283 96737 X

CAL CLOTHIER:
Death Mask
27pp. Bradford: Rivelin Press. £1.
0 904524 27 2

LEO AYLEN:
Red Alert: This is a God Warning
43pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £3.50.
0 283 98818 5

ROGER MCGOUGH:
Unlucky for Some
25pp. Bernard Stone. £1.50.

Feeding the Lake is a varied and consistently effective collection of poems with themes that range from ballroom dancers and park ducks to reflections on Easter and Shakespeare, and with forms that include a sequence of "Five Circus Songs" and "reflections" on poems by Baudelaire and Mallarmé. What unites the volume is the absence of triviality in the lighter poems and of overstatement in the more serious; all the facets of Mole's experience are presented in a thoughtful and technically painstaking manner which gives

each poem the quality of a meditation. We do not meet with urgent passion or with particularly vivid imagery, though Mole certainly possesses a gift for appropriate and memorable phrasing; the keynote of the collection is rather detachment, the sense of a balance in life between love and beauty and their adversaries, conceptualized as "The Scales". To quote one of his titles, "The Skater" is a fine example of Mole's controlled celebration:

Narrowing, narrowing, she tightens
To a point
The spin, the flash,
The spent coin of her fate.
Who loves her? The State
Manoeuvres on ice
And in, too, but without, oh without
Her grace. Too Late
Its applause for such beauty comes,
A luxury, exchange
At the wrong rate
Which will buy no guins
And can save no one;
Yet how she loosens and leaps now
To strains of Rachmaninov
And how, at the end, she bows
As if offering love
From the heart of this cold rink,
And how, oh how she is more beautiful
Than the patterns she made.

Mole's approach to the skater and analogy with the State is characteristic of his use of the everyday environment as the starting-point for more abstract reflections; we see the details of that environment through the medium of an attention that is at once tender and distant, as if through a sheet of misted glass. The result, as again in a poem like "Ball-

room Dancers", is a genuine "making it new" of his subject.

This last poem sees the dancers as expressing not the "whole flame" of love towards each other but affording "partial glimpses" of it. It is love, hedged round with discretion, or failure, or introspection, or the boundary of the "cold rink", that occupies the poet throughout. Mole is now just beyond the *mezzo del cammin* — he was born in 1941 — and the collection seems to have grown primarily out of a fascination with transience, with the sequence of human generations and with man's emotional vulnerability in the face of this. Several poems ponder his relationship with his father on the one hand and with his children on the other; love is affirmed, but there is a sense of wide perspectives opening up from this novel position of centrality, perspectives that have led the poet to reconsider its meaning. There is no strain in these poems, no need to strive after effect; language has been naturally fertilized by a mind remaining keenly conscious of its own experience, none of which is taken for granted and this type of integrity also results in the achievement of some successful light verse.

Taner Baybars also possesses a keen consciousness of his own experience, but this experience is much narrower and is subjected to a much less careful scrutiny. At first sight the theme of *Pregnant Shadows* looks promising: a disappointing and painful love-affair (or affairs) mingled with an involvement in what the back cover describes as "Christian mysticism". But one feels that the emotions have had too little time to mature; in the main sequence "21 Days of Christmas" Baybars achieves the occasional artistic coherence but his language is for the most part a series of spurts and gushes reminiscent of not especially distinguished journal entries. Some readers will no doubt find the immediacy this provides compelling, but for those who like a little more artistic transmutation *Pregnant Shadows* is unlikely to afford much interest. And "Christian mysticism" seems too elevated a title for the book's fervent but confused religious ingredients; Baybars more or less sums things up when he notes in a prayer: "I want to breathe in your Glory / and exhale myself in your Glory / but am too much drunk with her, unable / to sort out expletives from deeply felt prayers."

Cal Clothier's *Death Mask* contains eleven poems, about half of which are subdivided into several sections; and whether he writes about Crete, South America, or the death of an old woman in provincial England, Clothier never fails to

achieve an accomplished level of craftsmanship. Yet one feels the process is a little too cerebral; that what his carefully-chosen themes are so documented with such linguistic refinement, the poet's emotional involvement remains questionable. I confess to not enjoying "great moments of history" poems like "Darwin on the Andes" and "Nietzsche in San Marco, Venice". Clothier is better in poems such as "El Dorado", where he presents the life-denying artifice of an Indian mask. As this poem, the title, and the twin epigraphs from Mar Maré, *Death Mask* has a set, objective stare about it.

Leo Aylen's *Red Alert: This is a God Warning* is a brief play in voices set in a space shuttle on its way to the northern city of Alpha-ville. The shuttle is hijacked by the god Dionysus, who gives the passengers — long since reduced to zombies by the mechanized gratifications of American consumerism — one final chance to experience life properly before he crashes the shuttle. Also the injunctions to "Fuck/Wine/Prof Dance" are carried out, the passengers are revived. *Red Alert* is a zany, joyous and mildly interesting piece of convention-bashing which doesn't convince us that the Dionysiac orgy is the best means of getting mankind to unite in hymning the finale to Beethoven's Ninth.

Finally, Roger McGough's *Unlucky for Some* is a set of thirteen poems each with thirteen lines, spoken by a succession of society cast-offs: tramps, drunks, a thief, thieves, the old and infirm; a series of weakly protesting voices displaying their resignation and incapacity in suitably unpretentious language.

Forthcoming events at the National Poetry Centre, 21 Ears Court Square, London SW5, will include a reading by Ronald Hingley from his book *Nightmare Fever* — *Ridiculous Poets in Revolution* (Thursday January 28); and poetry readings by John Wain and Anthony Conran (February 4), Ted Walker and John Ormond (February 11), Michael Wadsworth and Wendy Cope (February 16), and Wes Magee and Keith Boyle (February 23).

New Departures No 14 (46p, £1.50, 0 902689) contains work by among others David Gascoyne, a homage to Denis Roche, Michael Deguy, Miroslav Holub, Elizabeth Smart, Peter Huchel, Michael Hamburger, James Berry, Adrian Mitchell, Tom Rickard, Yevgeny Yezhov, Tom Rickard, Yevgeny Yezhov, tushenko, Allen Ginsberg and Samuel Beckett. The issue also contains illustrations by Barry Fantoni, David Hockney and R. B. Kija.

Second eleven

By John Lucas

MICHAEL MEYER (Editor):
Summer Days
Writers on Cricket
255pp. Eyre Methuen. £7.95.
0 413 49060 2

Summer Days is no doubt intended as reading matter for winter nights, but I doubt whether it will long hold men, old or young, from the chimney corner. Far too many of the contributors appear to have little to say, but they say it at considerable length. Most of them claim to follow cricket although they disclaim any competence at playing it, but some admit that they neither understand nor like the game, and find it impossible to imagine how anyone could give their days and/or nights to it.

As it happens, this approach works perfectly for Beryl Bainbridge, who manages conclusively to demonstrate that she knows nothing about cricket, and at the same time writes a very funny parable about some more or less improbable members of her family for whom cricket was both a religion and a cause of feuds, and who helped her to understand that you can get blood from a stone. Her contribution is well worth reading, and so is Arthur Marshall's reminiscence of those far-off school

afternoons during which he volunteered for Long Stop (his capitals) on the grounds that "it allowed you to pass the time of day with friends enjoying nought nearby".

Yet even Marshall's piece, neatly titled "The Crooked Bat", pays homage to that misty nostalgia which creeps through the pages of *Summer Days*. It is announced by the silly, pointillist-style cover photograph, featuring fat men in grey flannels playing cricket on a village green in front of thatched cottages while shadows lengthen over the lush grass. This is not to say that writers about cricket should avoid all mention of the past. Indeed, to a large extent cricket is its past, since what ever happens in the present game is fully understandable only by reference to the players, games and laws of earlier years. But a proper understanding of such matters isn't at all the same thing as the damp pressings of those who assume that dross can be turned to gold by the mere mention of boyhood adulations or the remembered glory of a winning run or wicket. Nor has it to do with the coy confessions of the incompetent cricket addict. Cricket is addictive, but that should go without saying. Unfortunately, the majority of the contributors to *Summer Days* don't at all mind saying the obvious. And they seem positively to relish the chance of producing leadenly facetious accounts of their infatuations with cricket and of their attempts to play it.

An essay of the kind that Melvyn Bragg appears to think appropriate is one essay too many. To find at least half a dozen of them inside the pages of this book is a guarantee of boredom. (P. J. Kavanagh, Julian Symons and Ronald Harwood are among the worst offenders.)

If there is one belief about cricket that seems to emerge from these pages it is that the game is somehow the preserve of the public schools and/or private gentlemen's clubs. None of the contributors mentions league cricket nor Saturday and Sunday afternoon club cricket, although that is what the majority of cricketers play, and it is by and large from there that the really talented ones emerge. *Summer Days* therefore gives the impression of being not only a dull compilation, but a lazy one.

Even so, there are some good moments. Although Gavin Ewart's clever tripe-monosyllabic-rhyme exercise on Boycott fails, I think, because it simply isn't true ("He just stands and picks, flicks . . . SIX/No one could call this bat-and-pad lad ball" — Oh, yes they could, and anyway how many saxes has Ewart seen Boycott hit, let alone flick?), the McGonagall-style "Not Quite Cricket" is witty and accurate and a cut above any other poem in the volume.

But there are plenty of good, uncollected poems about cricket that

Michael Meyer might well have considered: Edmund Blunden's elegy on Hammond, for example. Harold Pinter makes Arthur Wellard sound like a character from one of his own plays, but then professional cricketers, like professional jazzmen, often cultivate a manner of speech that is sardonic and litotic. (On reflection, it is perhaps surprising that Pinter hasn't so far set a play in a cricket pavilion.)

Pinter's piece is excellent, and Roy Fuller's "From Sparrow Park to Stanley Park" has a fine description of McDonald's bowling action which is a model of careful and loving accuracy, and exactly what cricketing prose ought to be but hardly ever is. Perhaps one cannot often hope for such accuracy, for a daily newspaper needs its copy and most copy is bound to make for dull reading. Fuller recognizes this when he remarks, "To experience the irrelevancies, accidents, banalities and tediousness of actuality through the subjective vision, and then to see the rich and contradictory process in the newspaper subsumed in the bare, brief lists of scores (eg. O'Connor 1.b.w. 43)" made one speculate on the nature of experience."

Agreed. But writers, true writers, ought surely to be able to recapture the actuality? It is because so few of the contributors to *Summer Days* are capable of this, or seem even to understand the need for it, that the book is overall such a dismal failure.

In Jane Austen country

By Victoria Glendinning

GORDON MINGAY:
Mrs. Hurst Dancing
And Other Scenes from Regency
Life 1812-1823
Watercolours by Diana Sperling
73pp. Gollancz. £8.50.
0 575 03035 6

On the evening of September 17, 1816, the Mrs Hurst of the title was dancing blithely, without a partner, to the tinkling of a harpsichord; the moment was captured in watercolours by twenty-four-year-old Diana Sperling. The contents of two of Miss Sperling's sketchbooks are reproduced, in the same size as the originals and with holograph captions, in this volume. Elizabeth Longford provides a short foreword, and Gordon Mingay an introduction and notes to the seventy pictures, which were painted between 1812 and 1823.

The Sperlings were middle gentry, living on 500 acres at Dymes Hall near Halesdend in Essex. They were not very grand: this is Jane Austen country, Diana depicts her "Pappy and Mummy", as she calls them, playing an unending game of chess; and herself, taking an active part in cleaning, gardening, burning wasps' nests and even hanging wallpaper. Their recreations are bowls, fishing, dancing, swimming and riding. Mud and water are perpetual hazards: sister Isabella is always falling off her donkey into the dirt, and when Pappy and the girls pick their way in single file over the fields to have dinner with a neighbour, each carries a little bag with indoor shoes in it. (Pappy sticks his pumps into his back pocket.)

Diana's captions are: humorous and self-explanatory. "Mrs Sperling murdering flies — assisted by her maid who received the dead and wounded." Gordon Mingay, required to provide a parallel commentary, is driven to the pits of platitude: "Houses of the period were frequently plagued by mice, rats, bugs and flies . . . He found even less inspiration in a picture, simply called 'Breaking in the Donkeys'." "The donkey is said to have been introduced into England in Elizabethan times; it had been widely used in the ancient world . . . This is desperate stuff."

The research for the book has clearly been thorough and the American authors solemnly tell the reader how to re-create some implausible sounding menus (Concomme polonaise, Fillet of sole, Salmis de Gamo, Gorgonzola and Biscuits), filling in what Miss Sayers omitted to mention by recourse to other Lord Peter

What is most fascinating about the sketches, apart from the affectionate irony of the artist's personality and her odd talent, is the authentic glimpse of interiors and everyday life. Apart from the drawing and dining-rooms, the board floors are uncarpeted. Bedroom chairs are rush-seated ladder-backs. The Sperling family seems to have been a bit short of chairs; in a family-dinner picture, the visible chairs are all of different patterns, and "Mum" has drawn her sofa up to the table, her parrot in its cage on the opposite side. Sofas and armchairs are concealed under rather ill-fitting — or ill-drawn — loose-covers, and even elegant "contemporary" Sheraton-style chairs often have their seats flopped covered with chintzy material. The billiard-table stands in the front hall. There is an agreeable air

of improvisation about all the Sperlings' arrangements.

The girls wear white muslin dresses, puff-sleeved and high-waisted; except in hot weather, over their dresses they wear pelisses — sort of pinafore dresses, usually of a bright colour. Since they were sleeveless, the pelisses cannot have added much warmth. There are shawls — but how much happier women in country houses must have been once Lord Cardigan had invented the cardigan. The Duke of Wellington has already popularized the wellington, abbreviated versions of which are worn by the girls in the garden. For outdoors they also have red cloaks, and scute-shaped bonnets. Women of a certain age of course never go bareheaded, even in the house.

The girls and women are drawn

Stately soufflés

By Lindsay Duguid

ELIZABETH BOND RYAN and WILLIAM J. EAKINS:
The Lord Peter Wimsey Cookbook
138pp. New Haven: Ticknor and Fields. \$10.95.
0 89919 032 4

Snobbery about food and wine and an interest in the aristocracy are happily mixed in *The Lord Peter Wimsey Cookbook*. It makes no pretence to be a collection of useful recipes but is a compilation of the various distinguished and undistinguished meals consumed by the titled amateur detective in the course of his stories by Dorothy L. Sayers. The occasion of each meal is described (the shepherd's pie eaten at the Fenchurch St Paul vicarage on New Year's Day after a night's bell-ringing in *The Nine Tailors*, the porridge served by Bunter to Inspector Parker in *Whose Body?*), and the text is further enlivened with some of Lord Peter's snappier pronouncements on food and wine.

The notes on wine are more interesting; the wine that is drunk with the meals is always mentioned and the vitae rarely creep past 1910. In common with other detective novelists, Miss Sayers conveys quality by sticking to famous names and vintages. In a memorable scene in *Clouds of Witness* a port (shipped unknown of 1847 is produced by the Duke of Devonshire, the latter 1875

books and their own imagination. The transatlantic origin of the book adds to the interest when it comes to glossing broad sauce, blotters and cucumber sandwiches and to explaining "making a cup of tea in the British manner". You cannot but admire the devotion of the authors who treat the food with a reverence which is surely not yet at the level of the food itself. The food itself is clearly very different from today's on the evidence of this book. Quite apart from the quantity — breakfast, tea (both afternoon and high), five-course lunches, pudding followed by savoury, dinner followed by supper — not much of what Lord Peter ate seems palatable. Miss Sayers is somehow not convincing in her descriptions of upper-class food of the period (the authors suggest that she may have had help from her husband, Miss Fleming, author of *The Gourmet's Book of Food and Drink*, whose recipe for a hangover cure is included here). Dishes such as kippers, Welsh "rarebit" and mashed turnips ring true but one is less sure about pâté de foie gras from Fortnum's, tinned turtle soup and garishes of radishes cut into rosebuds.

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in *The Hidden Places of Britain* (256pp. Arlington Books, £9.95, 0 85140 542 8) Leslie Thomas has recorded his travels over a period of ten years to a variety of remote and picturesque localities from the Shetlands to Cornwall. The book is illustrated with photographs by Peter Chase-Brown and drawings by Shirley Falls.

Elevations

By Gavin Ewart

LESLIE CUNLIFFE, CRAIG BROWN and JON CONNELL (Editors):
The Dirty Bits
143pp. André Deutsch. £4.95.
0 233 97395 8

"She touched his organ, and from that bright epoch, even it, the old companion of his happiest hours, in capable as he had thought of elevation began a new and defiled existence." When I read these words in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, as a Cambridge undergraduate in 1936, I could scarcely contain my delight and surprise. Later, in the 1950s, a colleague in an advertising agency presented me with a privately printed (or was it Hart-Davis?) collection of such pieces by Edward Galthorne-Hardy, which she rightly considered a suitable birthday present.

This is a far larger and wider-ranging compendium. The passages selected fall, roughly, into five categories: 1, the general bawdy (eg. Shakespeare, " . . . have we some strange Indian with the great tool come to court, the women so besiege us? Bless me, what a fry of fornication is at door!"); 2, the natural historical (Aristotle, Lucretius, and Melville's fine description of a whale's penis in *Moby Dick* — what an appropriate title, one might frivolously say!); 3, the unintentional (as in Dickens above, depending largely on the changing meaning of words); 4, the very unintentional ("We played at Vingt-un, which as Fulwar was unsuccessful, gave him an opportunity of exposing himself as usual").

Jane Austen in a letter to Cassandra draws 5, the passage of concealed psychological significance (Henry James excelled at these, though Conrad is also quoted), where what is described is sexually symbolic. Religious mystics also hold up a two-way mirror of this kind.

The purest form, of course, is the completely unintentional (as against Rabalais and the Exeter riddles, which are consciously obscene). There is a childish element in our pleasure when the serious and respected writer is, as it were, caught out. *The Public House Hymn Book* for instance: "Soon shalt thou hear the Bridegroom's voice. The midnight cry. 'Behold, I come!'." Also the Bible (here mainly *The Song of Solomon* and *Leviticus*).

The Psychologicals are the next best. Quilp's desire for Little Nell's "little room" in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. It's impossible, I think, knowing Dickens's predilections, that he didn't have some kind of vague awareness of what his pen was up to. Sterne, on the other hand, very well knew and exploited the double sense in which his reader was invited to take him; he is a teaser and an equivocator and what he hints at never happens.

The book is divided into seventeen sections (*Dreaming*, *Spirits*, *Holding Your Own*, *Family Ties*, *Animal Magic*, etc) and in fact it does exactly what Byron in *Don Juan* says the editors of the classics did in his day, but for the opposite reason — it puts all the "grosser parts" of great and not-so-great writers together, not to save us from temptation, but to offer it. Peppys, Aubrey (but one story of a young scholar engaged with a diver when with his rutting — "Twins manifestation" — is missing), the two Burtons (of Melancholy and Arabia), Hans Carvel in Rabalais's and Prior's versions, it relies on all these; but not on such works as *Fanny Hill* and *L'Histoire d'O*, which are avowed pornography.

One marvellous example of the unintentional is also absent without leave (present in Galthorne-Hardy), the bit from George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (I seem to remember) about a lady who secretly kept eight brown curls in her drawers. Nor is Tennyson's masterpiece to be found, once famous in girl's schools: "The curse is come upon me," cried / The Lady of Shalott.